THE Hudson REVIEW

DANILO DOLCI:
What Does It Mean, To Die?

ROGER SALE:
England's Parnassus

DENNIS LYNDS:
A Blue Blonde in the Sky over Pennsylvania

CHARLES TOMLINSON:
Scrutiny Ten Years After

DENIS DONOGHUE:
The Good Old Complex Fate

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London Letter by IAN GREGOR.

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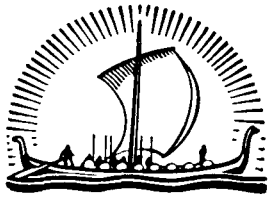

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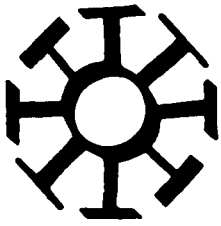

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Notes on Contributors

DENNIS LYNDS is a free-lance writer who lives in New York City. He has published two novels, *Combat Soldier* and *Uptown Downtown,* and is now revising a third.

ROGER SALE, a frequent contributor, teaches English at the University of Washington.

CAROLYN KIZER is the editor of *Poetry Northwest* and author of *The Ungrateful Garden,* a book of poems. She has just finished her second book, *Knock Upon Silence.*

GERALD BUTLER graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, last fall and now lives in New York. This is his first appearance in a national magazine.

IAN GREGOR is a Lecturer in English at the University of Edinburgh. In 1962 he published *The Moral and the Story,* a study of the role of moral judgment in fiction.

JACK RICHARDSON is the young playwright who wrote *The Prodigal* and *Gallows Humor.* His new play, *Xmas in Las Vegas,* is planned for production next year.

The Irish critic, DENIS DONOGHUE, is teaching at the Harvard Summer School this summer.

MARIUS BEWLEY is just finishing up a book on six English Romantic Poets, to be published next year by Random House.

CHARLES TOMLINSON is the noted British poet, author of *Seeing Is Believing* and *A Peopled Landscape.* A group of his poems on Mexican themes will be published in an early issue of this Review.

DANIEL AARON, Professor of English at Smith College, is the author of *Writers on the Left.* He is now assembling a volume of documents on the thirties, for Anchor Books.

SIGURD BURCKHARDT recently joined the Department of Literature at the University of California's new San Diego campus. He is working on interpretations of Kleist and Shakespeare.

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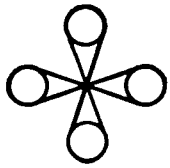

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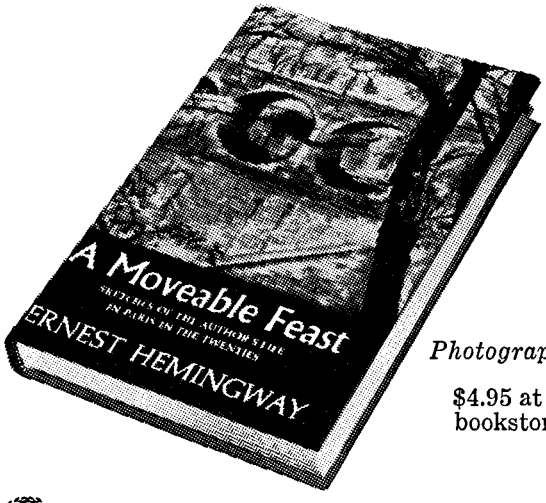

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DANILO DOLCI

What Does It Mean, To Die?

A Conversation in Sicily

This record of a conversation held one evening not long ago by the people of Partinico is included in Danilo Dolci's recent book, Conversazioni *(Einaudi, Turin, 1962).*[1] *In a letter to the publisher, Dolci writes: "Naturally it isn't a polished, well-written book. As the title says, these are notes of conversations that are useful to us the way his hoe is useful to the farmer, or his plane and hammer to the carpenter."*

Aside from unrelated material on regional planning, a report to a peace organization, and accounts of visits to Israel, the United States, and the Soviet Union, the book results from Dolci's arrangement of weekly evening gatherings in Spine Sante, the poorest quarter of Partinico, a depressed town in the barren mountains some seventeen miles southwest of Palermo. The tape-recorded meetings were held, after working hours, in a working-class tavern frequented by "farm workers, odd-job men, a few cowherds and a smallholder or two. The attendance fluctuates from twenty to thirty, who are generally the same people." Dolci proposes such subjects as "The problem of a schoolmaster who asks for a false certificate," or "What should be changed and what retained in the life of this area?"

Dolci, acting as chairman, insures "that everyone attending can voice his own views or experience freely, without prompting." Each person is called on in strict rotation, and then a general debate is opened. This insures that women, who would normally be prevented by local custom from speaking at all, can be heard. At the end, Dolci sums up the discussion and underlines the points of debate. The essential to a successful discussion is to develop an atmosphere of friendliness and comradeship.

The practical purpose of the meetings, and their registration on tape, is to enable Dolci's workers to understand the attitudes of the people whose lot they are attempting to improve; and to de-

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fine, through discussion, the need for change and action by Dolci's Center on such socio-economic problems as land redistribution, land and water conservation, improvement of agricultural, forestry and fishing methods, public hygiene, housing conditions, organization and protection of trade unions, public schooling and instruction, and defense against organized racketeering, extortion and violence.

At times the spirit of comradeship developed in these meetings encourages the normally taciturn Sicilian peasant to a rare, unpredictable moment of self-revelation, in which the native beauty of phrase in dialect, the direct simplicity of expression, reveal a lyrical imagination scarcely touched by the passage of centuries.

DANILO: The subject we're going to talk about tonight is a hard one, and I'm sure many of us have been thinking about it during the past week.

What is death? What does it mean, to die?

Let's start by asking our friend Ciro here what he thinks death is, what it means to him.

CIRO: It means being good while we're alive—doing right, being kind to others—and then dying in peace.

DANILO: And to die, to be dead, what does that mean?

CIRO: That a person's not here any more. Not here on earth.

DANILO: And what does that mean?

CIRO: If you do right, live right, they say you go to heaven. That's what they say, you go to heaven. I don't know. . . . I don't know about heaven, if there is one or not. But they say that you go to heaven, and that there you find rest. . . .

DANILO: Have you any other ideas, any other suggestions?

CIRO: Not now. Later on, if I do, I'll say.

DANILO: How about you, Giovanni? What do you think it means to die?

GIOVANNI: To tell you the truth, I don't want to die—ever. *(Laughter)* Me? No sir, not me. *(Laughter, talking)* When a fellow's alive, he gets around . . . I don't know . . . he sees something, at least. If nothing else, he goes to the movies once in a while—gets some fun out of life. Right? . . . If he's got

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money, I mean. If you've got no money, what can you do? Nothing.

All the same, the way I see it is, it's better for a person to be alive no matter what.

DANILO: But to die, what do you think that means? What is death?

GIOVANNI: Well—what do you mean, what is it? When a man gets around to dying, he dies. . . .

DANILIO: But what is death?

GIOVANNI: Look, what do you mean, what is death? A fellow shuts his eyes and he dies. How does he die? Well, he can die because they kill him. They kill him. There's this other fellow pulls the trigger, and he dies. But if a person dies because it's God's will, he dies because it's God's will. If they kill him, they kill him.

DANILO: There are two different kinds of death, then?

GIOVANNI: Eh, there are so many kinds of death. Maybe, God knows, they kill him, maybe he shoots himself, maybe he drowns. Anyway, there're lots of ways of dying.

CIRO: Your turn, Luigi!

DANILO: Let's let Giovanni go on and little by little get to the bottom of it. He's saying some important things. He's already said that there are different ways of dying, and other ideas will come to him as he goes on.

GIOVANNI: I've got no more to say about death, na. *(Laughter)*

DANILO: Did you ever think about it before?

GIOVANNI: Eh, sure I think about it. Sometimes I think about it and I say to myself, People are dying every second. Now, if I—God save me—if I died this minute, tomorrow's the soccer game in Palermo and I wouldn't get to see it, worse luck. . . . *(Laughter)* Right? But if I'm alive tomorrow I'll have a good time! I'll go to Palermo, I'll go to the game. . . . *(More people arrive.)*

DANILO: Good evening. *(A chorus of "Good evening, good evening")*

GIOVANNI: . . . Palermo's playing Padua tomorrow. . . . Zu Peppí, here's a seat, Zu Peppí.

LUIGI: What does it mean, to die? . . . To do right, isn't that it? So when God needs you, he sends death and you go to heaven.

DANILO: What does that mean, God sends death?

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LUIGI: God sends death? Because it's written there in His book about being dead. So He sends death, and so a person dies. Afterward, people say a man's been shot dead; he went around doing bad things and they kill him.

Now, if I died, I'd never get that spot that's waiting for me (*Laughter*) . . . I'd never get it—

DANILO: If you died? What spot?

LUIGI: The spot that's waiting for me—

DANILO: Spot where?

LUIGI: In the cemetery . . . *(Laughter)*

DANILO: I don't understand.

LUIGI: In the *cemetery. (Laughter)* I'm supposed to get the next spot that opens up in the cemetery. *(Laughter)*

DANILO: Oh, oh, I see. You're supposed to go to *work* in the cemetery. *(Everyone laughs.)*

LUIGI: Yes . . . *(Laughter)* If you don't let me talk . . . don't let me say anything . . . *(Laughter)*

DANILO: Go ahead, speak up.

LUIGI: The city gave me a list. There are four main parts of the cemetery, see. . . . There's the part where the fellow who's been killed goes, and where the fellow who's been hanged goes, and where the one who dies in God's grace goes—

DANILO: We understand. Now let's hear from this friend.

GIOVANNINO: The things the rest have been telling, that's what I say, too.

DANILO: You mean—

GIOVANNINO: If a person dies, he doesn't live down here on earth any more. By dying, well, it's like he doesn't get around here on earth any more.

DANILO: Doesn't get around?

GIOVANNINO: Sure, it's logical. He doesn't get around on earth any more, he gets around in the other world. He's in the other world —up there, they say.

DANILO: What does that mean, not being here on earth any more, being in the other world? What do you think?

GIOVANNINO: What can I think? That I die and I don't see any more. . . . When you die, you don't see anything any more. That's why a person can only say the same things they all say. . . .

DANILO: Then let's hear from our friend the puppetman.

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PUPPETMAN: Dying means closing your eyes to the sunlight. . . . Uh-uh . . . giving up your family's love . . . leaving your hearth and home behind . . . but getting rid of all the sorrows and miseries of this world, too. And going up there, maybe, the way they teach us. Maybe we do go up there, to be happy.

DANILO: What does "up there" mean, do you think?

PUPPETMAN: You end up . . . in the heavenly world—in paradise—or there's hell or purgatory, depending on the kind of person you are.

DANILO: Let's hear from Ninfa.

NINFA: Dying is when life stops, when life is too tired to go on here below. They say there's a paradise, but nobody's ever come down to say that there's any paradise up there, or that there's a hell. The rest of us, we say there's a paradise, but who ever told us so? Our Church teaches it, but nobody's seen it with his own eyes. Not with his own eyes. The real heaven and hell we have right here on earth, because all opposite things are part of this world.—That's what dying is.

DANILO: And what does dying mean to Donna Giuseppina?

DONNA GIUSEPPINA: That a person . . . has come to the end of her time. God grants us so and so many days, so and so many years to live out on this earth, then our fate—our death—comes, and we close our eyes and we stop seeing what's going on.

When a person dies, she leaves her family behind, so it's hard. Especially if she is conscious when she dies and is thinking about everyone, it's a hard thing for the heart to bear. And then you don't know where you are going to go after death, which place, where you're going to rest. . . .

VINCENZINA: It is hard to explain. "Dying is one thing and talking about it is something else," as the saying goes, and that's true. Death is a tragedy. When a thing doesn't work, that means that it's dead. If a thing does work, it's life, but when a thing doesn't go, doesn't work, it means death. There are so many kinds of death. A thing—how can I say what I mean?—a thing that doesn't work is dead. . . . Well, it's like this. I don't see anything any more, my children and my husband are left behind in the middle of this tragedy, left all alone. I think of death this way, it's something . . . it isn't fair.

DANILO: And Mattiuzzu now—you're the youngest person with us today—what have you to say?

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MATTIUZZU: I've been thinking about it all week long. It's been awfully hard for me, too, to try to explain to myself what dying meant. I think that dying means *(he reads)* "to pass from the materially living life to the spiritually meaning life; to draw one's last breath; to render up one's soul to God; not to be among the living any more; to go to heaven or hell, depending on one's behavior during the life lived on earth; to go to eternal rest; to close one's eyes to the light forever; to bring to a close the final moments of a span of intense labor and sacrifices and blessings and tribulations.". . . According to me, that is.

DANILO: It's important that Matteo felt it would be useful to put his ideas down on paper, to take notes so as to think better.

Now our friend . . . Mattiuzzu, would you mind moving over a bit, so that . . . I'd like to make a suggestion. What do you say if we move our chairs closer? *(Scraping)* We're closer together this way. There . . . And you?

FIFIDDU: It means the end of one's own existence. It's the heaviest sorrow a person can face—sorrow that one's own life is ending, sorrow at leaving friends, and family most of all. Here on earth we find some finagling—that's how it looks to me—over the fact whether you go to heaven or you go to hell, or to purgatory. . . . I don't believe very much in all that. There could be another life maybe, but I believe that if there is a heaven and a hell, or a purgatory, you're going to find them right here on earth where the people who tell us these things could be hiding the real truth so as to make something out of it for themselves. As for me, this is my opinion. . . . Where—let's put it this way—when we think about death and about life and the kind of existence we're born into, and we know that we have to die, we should respect each other like brothers, feel some humanity.

DANILO: Here's a new friend. What have you to say?

BORTOLO: The ones who've got nothing, the ones who've got to ask for a crust of bread, to ask that they be given a handout of charity, that this thing be given, that thing be done for them, that's hell. That is. Hell is having nothing to live on. Dying means when a person shuts his eyes, the soul goes away—they say we have a soul—and it goes away to paradise, but nobody's ever come back from up there and said, "There's respect up there, up there it's like a holiday, and there's enough to eat

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and drink." Nobody comes back to say you're well off up there. Death . . . you shut your eyes and you don't see anything more.

WAGONER: If someone tries, if someone goes everywhere looking for work to keep alive, and he doesn't find any, so he gets home: "What are we going to feed them? What are we to give them to eat?" . . . That family's dying, dying by inches.

And then there's the man who sees how he can't get work to keep the family together: "I'm no good! I'm a bum!" In that house there's real hell, hell on earth.

Take an animal—it's alive, and they kill it, but that animal doesn't go to any heaven. They have more feelings than we do, animals have. We—we're more savage than they are, because we kill them, slaughter them, and we eat them, that's what we do. We're more animal than they are, that's for sure. Just because the poor things can't talk. . . . But this isn't to say that us poor people eat them, it's the fat pigs who eat them, the ones who've got money. . . .

When somebody dies, what's left is nobody. My grandfather died, my father died, my cat died. Nobody's come around to me to tell me how well you eat up there, nobody comes back to say that or I'd say to them, "I'll be right up."

I know I rot. But where do I go? I'm a poor man, and us poor people they throw in a ditch, that's where they throw us! A fistful of dirt and good-by! Four bones, four bones they dig up ten years later. That's what death is.

MATTEO: Well . . . I just don't know. . . . Something'll come to me later.

SALVATORE (*With a child in his arms*): To me—I don't know—to me death is a terrible thing, especially when a person's managed to have a family and lives by his own work and sweat and loves his family, and then this scythe—death—cuts him down. It's the most terrible thing there can be in this world. It's the worst pain a person can feel, having to leave his children, his wife, mother, and everyone. Afterward, I don't know. . . . There is the comfort of our religion which teaches us that if a man lives his life here on earth by hard work, with brotherly love for all, each man helping his neighbor—I don't know, there is the comfort that when a person gives his soul to God he hopes to find eternal rest.

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DANILO: Do you think this is just trying to find comfort, or is it true?

SALVATORE: I believe it is true because I believe that there is a supernatural being who guides us, guides the sun, the moon, the earth, the sea—all those things. I believe that there is a being who lives above us. And I believe that he will be the judge who will judge the good souls and the bad. . . . Afterward . . . I don't know. This much they taught me, but afterward, I don't know. For me, death is the most terrible thing of all, because it's separation from your family, from your children, that's the most awful part. And the man who dies knowing that he's dying, I think he feels that pain then. Some people lose consciousness and they don't think about anything, they die more peacefully.

TOTO: What do you expect, what can I say about death? For me, dying means to do right toward all my friends, toward everyone I know and don't know. I don't believe in hell or in heaven either one, I just believe that when God says it's your time to die, you die.

NARDO: So often people die the wrong way—by hanging, maybe—and those things are bad, because they're . . . let's say they're not fit for people to have to see. But who knows? To me death seems just; it is just to be born and just to die. It's like a wheel that turns.

DANILO: Let me ask what you mean by that—a "wheel that turns"?

NARDO: You today, your sons tomorrow. We are all one being that goes on and on.

The wrong death, I think, is the death that is done wrong. To die from being killed, I mean, or to die of even worse deaths—to die by hanging, or to die from being burned, the way it's happened to so many. This is wrong. Otherwise it's just. One man dies, and let's say he leaves his place to someone else.

ZU VINCENZO: What does it mean, to die? I shut my eyes and die. What does it mean? You shut your eyes, the man dies, and there's nothing to be done about it.

DANILO: Let's hear from our American friend.

ROBERT YOUNG: It seems to me that if there were no death there would be no life, either. Death supplies an end to life.

The fact that we all must die should make us all brothers.

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DANILO: And our other American friend?

MIKE: Everything's been said. I've nothing to add.

DANILO: Let's hear from Raffaele.

RAFFAELE: But Danilo, death . . . death is the terror of mankind. A man can live to be two hundred years old, say, and say his family despises him, say he can't even so much as stand up, but when the moment to die comes: "No! I don't want to die!" he says. He'd still want to live forever. Of course, they say you die and you go to heaven. That's what they taught us, you die and you go to heaven, but I don't believe that. What do the history professors really know about Christ's death? Nothing.

DANILO: Hello there, Mimiddu! Why, you've had a shave! Sit down, sit down. . . .

RAFFAELE: Man is the most ferocious animal on the face of the earth. Why, he even hangs himself.

DANILO: Probably no other animal exists that hangs himself.

RAFFAELE: Exactly. Man is more terrible than any other animal. Do good? Sure. But not with the idea of going to heaven some day. As far as I'm concerned, it's a superstition, this sprinkling a little water over somebody. . . . I think this is a superstition, because if God really existed—don't be offended, ladies, eh?—everything that happened all over the world during the last war, up to and including the atomic bombs; everything that happened in Germany—worse than barbarians, they are, shooting thousands of children, burning about four million people—*burning them alive*—well, Jesus Christ should have done something, should have done something at least *once*. Is this humanity?

And remember, this was *yesterday*, not a hundred years ago. Brotherhood, respect for others, not this pushing each other around.

DANILO: Let's hear how a doctor sees death.

DOCTOR: I'll try to be brief. Disregarding the causes and the kind of death, as a doctor I can tell you that death is the definitive cessation of cardiocirculatory, respiratory, and cerebral activity. That is to say, the heart no longer beats, breathing stops, the blood no longer circulates in the veins, and the brain stops functioning.

There is no sharply defined transition between life and death;

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it develops gradually and imperceptibly in a series of phenomena that up to a certain point can be reversible. The life of a complex organism like that of a human being depends on the harmonious co-ordination of various tissues and organs functioning collectively and interdependently, from which life ensues. Since the interdependence among the functions of the principal systems—nervous, respiratory, and circulatory—is such that a prolonged stoppage of any one of them inevitably leads to a stoppage of the others, we can give this conventional definition of death: the persisting, definitive cessation of activity of the three great systems—nervous, respiratory, and circulatory.

Generally, the last activity to cease is the heart's, so that we may definitely say that death coincides with the cessation of the heartbeat.

Before the final moment, several premonitory signs, when they occur, consist in a progressive disorder in the three fundamental functions. Thus, breathing becomes irregular, less frequent, and less deep; the pulse falters and the beat weakens; the extremities grow cold and turn bluish; the hands and feet turn cold; cerebral activity reacts first to the effects of inadequate circulatory and respiratory functions, for the blood is no longer supplying sufficient nourishment to the brain. For this reason, the dying person responds less and less to external stimuli: the pupils do not react to light, so that he no longer sees, no longer recognizes those around him; even powerful stimuli arouse no response in him, and he no longer feels pain; he grows progressively weaker, until he expires.

I have seen a great many people die, and I can tell you that in those last moments you see what stuff a man is made of, see his real caliber—whether he's the good man he's been reputed to be, or bad; whether he's strong or weak.

DANILO: Thank you. Shall we hear from Marco?

MARCO: It's hard being one of the last ones to talk, because so many things—important things, too—have been said. All the same, I just want to say that every time I happen to think—well, I don't think much about it, I've never thought much about it, but every time it passes through my mind that one day we have to die, then there're two things I feel inside. One is feeling sorry—if you believe in what you're doing, in the

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life you're leading, and if you're hoping to do more all the time, then I feel sorry that death is coming along to smash everything I want to do in life. My second regret is, I think . . . I think that I'll be hurting someone else. Maybe it is egoistic to say "Because I am going away, other people will suffer" but, actually, that can happen. Each one of us lives in a family, we live with friends, and if someone is missing, the others do suffer.

MIMIDDU: I think each of us is maybe—maybe we are all pretty far away from death. Or everybody thinks he is pretty far away from death, because if we were all close to it, we'd keep thinking about it and none of us would be doing things, the way it turns out we do. There's—it's distracting to keep thinking about it.

When we die, there's no heaven or hell. There's supposed to be such a place, people like to say there is, but no one can exactly say that that's so. It's a saying, let's call it a saying—oh, you know, like "Now get with it, boys." It makes us want to be known for not doing wrong. But is it true, or is it not true? I don't hold much with these things myself.

A minute ago, Raffaele said that during the last war so many, many people were killed and so "There's no God," he says. Why? God's there. We've never seen Him, but for life to be, He's got to be there. If there were not this Being above the earth, there'd be no rain, no grass would grow, no plants, and we wouldn't be here. This Being is there, all right. But far away from us. We're not worthy to be near this Being. That's why God said what He said: you people do what you like, He said, for I am leaving you because you are beasts. And He went away and left us. So, if there's some man who kills a hundred people, or two hundred or three hundred, or even a whole town, God doesn't give one damn: "What you want to do, do!"

People say, "But God's heart should be moved." Huh! God doesn't want to get mixed up in it, because we've proved that we really are crueler than wild beasts. People say, "But we are not wild beasts." That's true. We are baptized beasts, baptized animals. We have been domesticated, and we domesticate other animals that have not been domesticated. But even so we are beasts, and in some things the animals do better than the rest

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of us. We are reasonable animals, so we do more treacherous things than animals do.

Death, dear Danilo, is a truly difficult thing to reason about. It's a—I don't know, it's a difficult problem. It's deeper than we're able to get through to, even if we've studied. Sure, you can read what's written in the books, but the man who wrote the books . . . are the things he wrote certain? The author, the newspaperman, he writes what he wants to write. Now, just for an example, I borrow a paper and I read it. But that reporter now, is he telling the truth? Did he see it with his own eyes? Was he able to make sure?

DANILO: Let's have some discussion now. You want to say something?

RAFFAELE: I have to answer Mimiddu. He says this: Jesus Christ sends us rain. This isn't so. It isn't Christ who sends us rain, it is atmospheric conditions that produce rain. In fact, if you go up north, there's always rain and snow. If you go to Mont Blanc, there's eternal snow. If you go to Africa, it rains once every seven years. However, let the business about the rain go—let the sun and the moon go, because you'll see that in the next hundred years they'll discover things—

PUPPETMAN: Signor Danilo has been trying to find out what we think it means to die. To *die* . . . If we are able at all to say what we think—not everybody, not the ones who don't know how to express themselves—the least we say is "I don't know how to put it into words, what dying means." But this other has got nothing to do with it. I mean all this talk about just *politics,* and that's what we're talking about now—politics. Does God exist, does God not exist, does rain exist, does rain not exist, and who sends it and who doesn't send it.

I put it this way. I say it's snuffing life out for once and for all, closing your eyes on the light of this world here below. All right? But all this business of talking about if God exists, if God doesn't exist, we're not here to fight religion. All right? I think that we've been guided—created, too—by an immortal Being. . . . By an immortal Being. All right? I'm speaking as a Catholic.

And speaking just for me, I say that dying means closing our eyes, snuffing out our own existence in this earthly life.

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MATTEO: If there is this Being who's the head of everybody, then there must be a heaven and a hell. If there isn't, then there is no heaven and no hell.

MIMIDDU: We've established this Being as a fact; that's established. But the fact about heaven and hell now, nobody's come along to say "It exists" or "It doesn't exist." That's an illusion. Am I right? . . . Well, am I or not? The Being exists, but the business about heaven and hell is a kind of a net, to make for respect, for brotherhood—

DONNA GIUSEPPINA: I say this. If this Being exists, and if heaven and hell don't exist, then where does this Being exist?

MIMIDDU: In heaven. But—

DANILO: Just a minute, Mimiddu. Let's hear what Donna Giuseppina has to say.

DONNA GIUSEPPINA: For my part, I say like Matteo: if there is this Being, then heaven and hell must be there, too. If not, what's this Being existing for? For nothing? He exists to judge the whole of time, our whole life, the good deeds and the bad. You think this Being exists just to sit in heaven?

MIMIDDU: Right—

DANILO: Mimiddu, just a minute. One at a time. It's his turn, then Giovanni, then Mimiddu.

WAGONER: All this talk about heaven and hell! When it's a question of living, there's a heaven, and when it's a question of dying, there's a hell!

GIOVANNI: I say that there is no heaven and there's no hell. There is a God, but not in heaven. Who says God's in heaven? Who ever saw this Lord God up in heaven? There's a God, all right, but here on earth. Because Jesus Christ once walked on earth. He was a man, like all other men. Then Jesus Christ, well, they killed Him, they say.

If I am a bad person, if I do wrong on this earth, they say that there's a God that can punish me, that can say to me, "You have been a sinful man, you have been an evildoer, and I'm going to make you be sick for a day, for ten days, on account of the evil you've done." . . . But when you shut your eyes, my dear friends, there is no heaven, and no hell either! And not even purgatory. There's nothing. You shut your eyes and you die.

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MATTEO: I say, it is all a gift of Nature. I don't believe in any heaven or hell or in any God, the way you people think.

GIOVANNI: Tell me one thing. In your whole life have you ever been sick?

MATTEO: Yes. What's that got to do with it?

GIOVANNI: And when you were sick, really sick, did you never say "Oh, Lord Jesus, help me"?

MATTEO: No.

GIOVANNI: You never said that?

MATTEO: No.

GIOVANNI: Then you're no Christian. (*Buzzing of voices*)

MATTEO: No. I'm an animal. And you, begging your pardon, I suppose you're a man because you've been baptized?

GIOVANNI: . . . You mean you're *not*?

MATTEO: I am baptized because they baptized me.

GIOVANNI: Well, sure, we all were. Because that's what we've been taught, right? But there isn't a man, there isn't a person who doesn't say "Jesus Christ, help me. Lord Jesus, help me!"

MATTEO: Because that's what we've been *taught*! Because that's what we've been taught!

GIOVANNI: But—

MATTEO: Let me finish! Suppose they'd taught us something different—

GIOVANNI: See here, I don't go to church, and—

DANILO: One person at a time, please.

GIOVANNI: . . . I never go to church, and my children and my wife, they don't go, either, because the priests, that's an art. The way I have a skill as a penman, and somebody else is a mason, and somebody else is a doctor or a lawyer, that fellow's a priest, and he's got his job—which is to live off of us. I don't want them living off of me.

A VOICE: . . . go mind his own business.

GIOVANNI: I don't believe in this priest, see. But I do believe that there is a God, and I think we have Him with us here on earth.

MATTEO: No!

DANILO: We understand all the different positions now. Let's hear—you wanted to say something?

WAGONER: It's a gift of Nature. As we come, so we go. Dust we

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are born, and dust we die. . . . But all this business about Jesus Christ and Virgin Marys! You understand what I mean?

MIMIDDU: . . . and therefore the real hell is right here.

WAGONER: . . . we are all moving toward death.

RAFFAELE: I want to add this to what's been said. Suppose a baby's born. If you shut him up, if you never teach him to speak, never to say a word, and if you bring him up like that until he's twenty, then see if he knows how to talk. He's an animal, a dumb animal. But if the father of a goat goes "Baa," then the goat says "Baa, baa.". . . The existence of God is something a person's taught to say. He's born, so he has to speak. But he doesn't talk if he's not taught to talk.

VINCENZINA: We don't know how the world was made, or much about how it keeps going on, and so we say God. But we don't know what that really means. It's like giving a name to something we don't know, don't know anything about.

When we don't know something, or don't know what to do, we say God and that makes us feel good. It's a way of getting a weight off our minds.

NARDO: Tonight everybody's talking about death, but it would be a good idea to talk about birth. That's the first thing.

DANILO: All right. Next Friday, when we have the discussion about what the puppetman will be showing us, we can think about topics for the time after that, and hear what everyone has to suggest.

At this point, has anyone anything to add? (*Silence*)

Then would you like me to try to find some point in common—to see whether there is anything we all agree about? Actually, while you were talking, I was thinking to myself how very many things that were being said here are already fine and clear. There's no need to summarize them. But there are a few hurdles—two or three points—that we should try to clear up together.

The first thing everyone agrees about, I think, is this:

Last week we weren't very clear about the meaning of life, and tonight we are even less clear about what death means, because, of course, we have less direct experience of it. . . . Is that right? Shall I go on?

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VOICE: Yes, yes. . . .

DANILO: I'll go on, then.

If we feel that a great many things are obviously good and a great many things are obviously bad and unjustified and inacceptable, as this business of living goes on from birth to death we also feel how being alive is complex and mysterious. We sense that it is a miraculous, prodigious thing, but we also feel fear. . . . Right? Can we go on to point two?

When a person is young, he isn't aware of being alive—I mean that he doesn't think about life or about death. Time passes, and this person can be so caught up by the things happening around him that when he looks in the mirror, he doesn't see his own ever-changing self. A man looks in a mirror, and all he sees is how he washes his face or combs his hair, or maybe how he brushes his teeth.

A man doesn't see his own face, he just sees a face that's having its teeth brushed; he looks at it absent-mindedly, as if it belonged to somebody else. We are all like this, with our minds on other things. And then, all of a sudden, we wake up one day to the fact that boys—or girls—no longer glance at us when we walk by; a person will notice that children even laugh.

And so the years pass, and we try halfheartedly to fool ourselves; partly out of an unknowing fear, partly because the problem itself is so hard, we avoid facing up to it squarely. Living becomes a little bit like building a bridge across a river —we begin from one side and we go on and on, stretching out into nothingness and never seeing the other bank.

DOCTOR: Freud—he was a doctor who treated mental illnesses, and he saw a lot of suffering, sick people—Freud said this: every one of us is privately convinced that death will come to all men but that for us life will make an exception.

DANILO: We feel fear largely in proportion to our lack of a clear conception of something. Little by little as we learned what death was, we would become at the same time more sure, and less sure, of ourselves. That is to say, we would become more exactly sure.

Do we agree about this?

VINCENZINA: We have a saying in Sicilian: death is here, but who knows when.

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DANILO: Good. For example, a pine or fir rafter in a roof holds up for a while and then it splits. Maybe the wood is old; that is, its fibers have lost their fresh, binding strength and so it crumbles, it wears out. Or maybe it's overloaded, and beyond a certain weight, beyond a certain supporting tension, it snaps in two. Right? Is this what happens? When we are young, timbers never shatter, everybody's life is eternal—not that we actually believe that life is eternal, we just never think that the rafters can ever give way. Right? Is this the way it is?

SALVATORE: Yes, that's the way it is, the rafter can't bear the weight.

DANILO: We could put it this way: dying is the snuffing out of a certain charge of life. The same thing that happens when a candle goes out. At first the wick and wax burn; the wick and the wax, together with air, are transformed into heat and light. Then there's no more candle, just some blobs of wax. There is still the fact of having been able to see and to work in the light of the candle; there's the memory of the candle and its flame, and a certain warmth that has spread through the air, yes, and the warmth is still in the air. Right? Is this right?

DONNA GIUSEPPINA: The way they say we are alive so long as there is oil in our lamp, and when that is finished, our life is finished.

PUPPETMAN: A man dies the way the lamp dies, when breathing stops.

DANILO: Now let's take one more step.

It's true of grain and plants and animals that when a new being has been created, with its own individuality (is that clear? That means with its own self or identity), this new life grows by nourishing itself on the world around it, on substances that are in what we call earth. It grows up, it matures, and presently this charge that holds it organically together weakens little by little and finally wears out. And the unity of the individual is undone. And the life that was in it is transformed into new and other forms.

The grass in a cemetery is a darker green than grass outside a cemetery. It grows thicker and higher—

GIOVANNI: Because it's feeding on us . . .

DANILO: Or else there's a violent shock, the vital organs break

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down or are rapidly used up, and when this charge of life no longer has the organs it needs in order to function, it is checked or crippled or destroyed. Does this seem right?

NARDO: That's right. That's the way it is.

DANILO: One more step, then.

The quality and the quantity of that initial charge are very important, but it can develop well or it can develop badly, in harmony or in conflict; it grows depending upon what elements are available to nourish it.

We could put it another way and say that living means transforming certain energies into other energies, using some in order to create others. If we make good use of our energies, we not only build ourselves up well but the things around us, too, just as making bad use of them destroys us and the things around us. To destroy means to die or to kill.

Does anyone want to add anything here?

MIMIDDU: I feel . . . I feel what's being said is important.

DANILO: Then, after all this talk about the hereafter, just one more thing: I think we can have a pretty clear idea about death up to the point at which we die. After that, for some of us there is a big question mark; for some there is faith that the individual life continues; for others it means the end of individual life. Right? Are we agreed that on this point we do not agree?

MIMIDDU: No, no, we should agree—

DANILO: Yes, but if we have three points of view—

MIMIDDU: If each one of us would just think, I must, I have to die . . . because a person has to make room for the other ones who come after . . .

FIFIDDU: About what happens after death . . . there is still doubt about the existence there has to be afterward—spiritually.

RAFFAELE: Death shouldn't *be*. There shouldn't be such a thing as death, the way there shouldn't be wickedness.

DANILO: Just the same, in one way we all can see that a person does not die. Everything we do has reflections, in good or in evil, in our families and in the world around us. Just as we grow on the nourishment we have, so do others. If we are good, harmonious nourishment for those around us, as they grow they will be better and more harmonious.

MIMIDDU: We would all agree to that.

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GIOVANNI: As the seed is sown, so it grows, and somebody reaps it.

DANILO: Let's say it right out in so many words: at the bottom of our hearts, we are all a little afraid at the idea of losing our personality, our individuality. This feeling should lead us to think how we can make our individual life as valuable as possible; in other words, as we were saying the other evening, it should make us think about what it means to live in the best possible way.

VOICES: That's the way it ought to be. . . . That's it. . . . That's the way it is. . . .

RAFFAELE: Sure, that's what I say—some things come from Nature—

NARDO: Everything comes from Nature.

RAFFAELE: Take, for example, when you clear away a pile of bricks. When the bricks are cleared away, after half a year or a year that grass called maidenhair fern starts to grow. It starts to grow without any seed, but now how is that possible? Possible that it grows without any seed?

GIOVANNI: It's the same rain.

MATTEO: I say no grass grows except from seed.

VINCENZINA: All old people around here make preparations for their own death. My grandfather had new clothes all ready—shirt, underwear, suit, socks—and my grandmother, she had a new petticoat and a kerchief, and a little cushion for putting under her head in the coffin. Every single thing new. Almost all our old people have it on their mind, and they get ready before. My grandmother had her things ready for ten or twelve years.

Everything's made ready beforehand, because they don't want to bother their children when they die. Their children shouldn't have to run around to find new clothes, or dress them in their old things. They want to be dressed in new clothes. "We should come before the Lord in old clothes!" they say. They want to be all dressed up, as if it were a holiday.

My uncle sent a new dress from America for my grandmother, but she wouldn't have anything to do with it because she couldn't be sure that it was really new. She wanted her material bought by the yard, and it had to be silk, too, not percale or cotton, out of respect for God. And so people couldn't talk about her.

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Then if they can't die—when they're already turning stiff and can't hear or see any more and their breath is rattling in their throat, if they still can't die, then their relatives put an iron bar under the pillow and they die straight off. They do that so the person won't suffer.

People say that if a person doesn't go peacefully, that's a sign that person's killed cats and the spirits of the cats won't let him die in peace. But then, if you put a hammer under him the cats' spirits go away.

DANILO: It's getting a little late. I want to ask you all one question: Do you think we've been wasting our time this evening?

MIMIDDU: No, no, what do you mean, it's been important.

DANILO: All of us, singly and together, will be able to see these things better and more clearly with time. Also, I think that from now on it will be better for someone else to guide these discussions.

TOTO: We could even try running them in different ways.

CIRO: That's a good idea. We'll meet next week, then?

MIMIDDU: Good evening, all.

[*Translated by Adrienne Foulke*]

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DENNIS LYNDS

A Blue Blonde in the Sky over Pennsylvania

JOHN CASHMORE LAY ON HIS SIDE IN BED. He watched the moving pattern on his bedroom floor made by the early morning sunlight through the leaves of the old oak outside his window. Connecticut, he said to himself, is lousy with old oaks. If there was one thing Connecticut had it was old oaks. Very good to sit under in the early sunlight on spring mornings. Only no one sat under trees on a Thursday except bums and children. Not in Connecticut.

"You look like you slept on nails," his wife said.

Wide awake and dressed, she came into his bedroom carrying his morning cup of tea. She raised the window shade all the way and the sunlight flooded against his eyes.

He said, "Do you enjoy blinding me?"

"Drink your tea. Bad day yesterday?"

"Since I didn't come home until eleven-thirty that's a pretty stupid question. We planned Chicago. Expense accounts again." He sipped the hot tea and watched the sky outside his window. "God! I thought all that would be over once I made department head, but it goes on and on."

She sat on the foot of his bed. "Get another job. You could get a hundred jobs."

"Where?"

"Anywhere! Look."

"Another job would be just the same," he said.

She said, "I think you just need something to be angry about."

"Thanks," he said.

She said, "Let's start all over. Good morning."

He smiled to her. A tall woman who was going grey, and her body was smoothly solid. She stood and walked to the window. With her short hair and thickened body she seemed shorter than she was. If she lost fifteen pounds, he estimated, she would still look a little like the girl he had married.

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"It *is* a lovely day," she said. "You know, I think that Sears boy is home again. The Army must be getting very lenient. That boy spends more time at home than he does in camp. Thank God you missed all that."

"Good thing for Mary I missed all that, might not be here at all."

"What a thing to say."

"Let's try for another right now."

"Come on, now, you'll miss your train."

"I forgot, it's not Saturday night."

She picked up his empty tea cup. "If that's all you want find a chorus girl."

"I wonder if you'd mind at all?"

"I'll start your shower," she said. "And I would mind."

"Sorry. It was last night."

In the shower the hot water washed down his body. He shut his eyes as if in a shell of thick warmth. Wrapped in warmth and carried far away into a liquid world where he felt he would never have to move or open his eyes. The shock of the cold water made him clench his teeth. But he forced himself to stay under until he had counted twenty-five. Once he had made it a rule to stay under the cold water until he had counted his age, but that was going too far now. When he was dry, he dressed and went downstairs to breakfast.

"Dad," his son Johnny said, "go to a new hotel, okay? I already got two Chicago postcards."

"You *have* two Chicago cards," his wife corrected.

"Have," his son said, "will you Dad?"

"All right," he said.

His daughter said, "You'll be back for the dance, won't you? It's Sunday, I said you'd chaperone."

"I'll be back," he said. "Who are you going with?"

"Freddie Sears, he's on furlough."

He poured a second cup of coffee. "Why don't you try to find a boy who lives, say, half a mile away? You know, give the world a chance."

His wife said, "I like Freddie Sears."

"Sorry again," he said, "don't pay any attention to me."

When he left the house the sun was above the hills to the east

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across the valley. The whole valley seemed different because he had decided to walk down the hill. The sensation of walking in the warm spring air was pleasant, but the bright sun hurt his eyes. The last time he had walked regularly down the hill was during the war when it had been unpatriotic to ride too often. Now it was unpatriotic to walk. Detroit didn't approve. People looked at him from the windows. He remembered all the small flags with blue stars in the windows during the war. Faces instead of blue stars now, and he stopped at the last rise above the station to give all the faces a chance to see him so they could talk about it later. *The Cashmores' car must be busted.* Beyond the red-tile roof of the station, and beyond the many-colored roofs of the town, the white houses far across the valley on the opposite hill seemed to shine in the blue morning light like the houses of an Indian hill station or the forts of Moroccan sheiks. White houses like toys through the blue morning haze of the valley. He wondered if there was a man standing on the opposite hill gazing across at all the white houses on his hill.

On the train he read his newspaper carefully all the way in to Grand Central where he caught a taxi for Pennsylvania Station and the Chicago train. Charley Addison was waiting in their compartment. A big, red-faced man, Charley was the company's best salesman. Smoking a cigar, Charley began to complain about old J.J. and his penny-pinching ways before the train left the station.

"I tell you true, Johnny, I've about had it. I'm not used to that kind of kicking around. Not one damn, you know?"

"Why don't you get another job?"

"I've been keeping my eyes open, I kid you not."

The train emerged into the desolate smoke and marshland and dumps of the Jersey Flats. Here the sun was thin and pale. Even spring was grey and cold on the desolation of the Flats.

He said, "Let's get going on the presentation."

"Already? Let's go to the club car for an eye-opener."

"Work now, play later," he said. "Start with the floor space figures, okay?"

"You're the boss," Charley said.

They were still working when the train passed through Philadelphia and turned west toward Pittsburgh.

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2

The blonde was blue from the ribbon holding her long hair to the sharp points of her shoes. Pale blue eyes the color of the light Wedgwood dinner set he had brought his wife from London six years ago. A tight blue skirt and a powder blue cashmere sweater stretched by high breasts. He sat watching her. Charley was talking with her and with a young man who worked for Dupont. The sky outside the club car was a soft golden bronze of evening.

Charley was saying, ". . . that'll give us all Saturday to show you the town. How's it sound?"

"It's a straight offer," the blonde said.

Her narrow blue skirt projected like a canopy over the knee of her crossed leg. Long legs and smooth.

"The country's different out here," he said. "It's bigger. You feel it's part of a very big country. I don't feel that in Connecticut."

"Where do you live in Connecticut?" the blonde asked. "No, let me guess. An old house, very comfortable. It's painted white and there's a lawn with trees all around."

"Something like that," he said.

She had straight, almost severe features that clashed with the soft smile she gave the waiter when he brought her Scotch and water. Charley and the young man from Dupont both reached for the check. The young man won. It gave him a pleasant feeling of power to let Charley reach for the checks. The young man from Dupont left too large a tip and the smiling waiter bobbed his head up and down like the Japanese spies in the old war movies on television.

"Television is going to raise a damned confused generation," he said to the blonde. "If they watch the new movies they'll love the Japanese and Germans, and hate the Chinese and Russians. If they watch the old movies on television they'll hate the Japanese and Germans, and love the Chinese and Russians."

"Is that bad?" the blonde asked.

"I suppose not. They might be so confused they'll wonder if war isn't pretty damned stupid."

Charley said, "Stupid is right. Four lousy years."

He said, "Charley started as a lieutenant and ended as a major. Infantry, too. Isn't that right, Charley?"

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"Yeh, I was a hero," Charley said.

The young man from Dupont said, "I was in Europe. Sixty-sixth Division."

He sipped at his drink while they talked of a war he had known only as a gasoline shortage and too many trips to Washington. He would probably know the next one better. His son would not be as lucky as he had been, and the next one would probably end it for everyone. No more control over it than over the pale evening sunlight that cast a geometric pattern on the club car floor like the pattern of oak leaves on his bedroom floor that morning. And outside the train window the giant slag heaps of outer Pittsburgh steamed with waves of heat. In the black factory buildings small figures seemed to be dancing around the red flames of the blast furnaces that were brighter than the evening sun. Once, he saw a stream of white-hot steel pouring into glowing red molds on a flat car.

The blonde said, "It's beautiful in a way, isn't it?"

He nodded. "When I look at a steel mill I think that there are people really working, making something, changing the world. They must have a real sense of doing something."

"I don't expect they think about it," the blonde said.

"I guess not," he said.

In the dark Pittsburgh station misty rays of sun filtered down from the high ceiling. On the platform a man in grimy overalls waved to the blonde. She smiled and waved back. The man rolled his eyes up toward the station ceiling. The blonde laughed an open laugh that reminded him of his daughter laughing at a dance where she was enjoying herself. The man on the platform shrugged in mock despair and walked away to work somewhere on the train. And he could have been the man out there. A man wearing overalls and admiring a blonde through a train window. If his father had been a different man. If his father had been an immigrant worker instead of a minor executive in a construction company. Then he would have been a different man in a different job. A laborer, perhaps, instead of Director of Design for J. J. Salisbury & Co., Architects, New York. Of course he could have been something else if he had wanted to be something else but somehow the question of wanting to be something in particular had never come up except once when he was ten years old and had wanted to be a pirate. *A pirate,* his father had laughed, *Well now,*

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that's a noble ambition, Johnny. A bit bloody, but definitely noble. The market's very limited, though. How about a second choice just in case? His father had been such a big man then. A big, laughing giant. Later his father had become so small, and the joviality changed somehow to weakness and too much whisky. The big, friendly eyes became the confused eyes of a man who could never make a decision and was Assistant Purchasing Agent in the same construction company for twenty-two years. And there had been a blonde. A blonde little girl who clapped her hands and said she was going to be first mate on his pirate ship until he told her that girls could not go on a pirate ship. Then she screamed at him, *Pirates aren't real anyhow! I'm going to marry a doctor and have a big house and a butler and a trillion million dollars!* And that was the only time the question of wanting to be something special had ever come up that he could remember now. His mother analyzing, *I think architecture would be good, John. Your father still has influence in the building field. You have a flair for drawing anyway. Yes, architecture sounds right, don't you think?* That was the summer in Maine, just before he went up to Cornell. Nearly eighteen and he had still wanted to be a pirate only he had known enough not to mention that to his mother. Late in the season and almost alone in the deserted hotel. The wind cold on the open Maine coast. A few stray people bundled in sweaters on the beaches. And a seventeen year old boy hidden high on a cold sand dune where the tall grass bent in the wind. A boy dreaming of a stormy sea and sails straining overhead and white water washing over him where he stood at the wheel of his ship.

"You're in a brown study," the blonde said.

He said, "Kids are crazy. In my day it was pirates, or Indians, or white hunters on safari. Today it's spacemen or underwater explorers."

"Children have a small world," she said.

"Or a big one," he said.

A train flashed past in the opposite direction. He realized that they had left Pittsburgh and were travelling across open countryside again. The sun was low and pale, and the faces of the people on the other train were white blurs. And all the faces on that other train were seeing him as a white blur flashing past and gone.

"Time to tie on the feed bag," Charley said. "Let's go."

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"I suppose so," he said.

"Tell you what," Charley said, "how about a little pinochle after dinner? What say, George, join us?"

George was the young man from Dupont. "Thanks, I'd like to."

He said to the blonde, "Are you eating?"

"Not yet. I don't like to eat while it's still light, too much to see out there."

At dinner he let the other two talk and watched the countryside that was now the color of orange copper in the fading sunlight. The copper and blue haze of evening. The fields were copper, and the houses. The roads dark copper bordered by copper and blue trees that swayed in the evening breeze. The few people were small and black but with a copper sheen. People who seemed frozen immobile as the train passed their fields and homes. And above the houses and barns and fields and trees the body of the blonde in the club car lay soft and naked. Naked and copper and blue in the evening sky. And in the sky she moved and all her copper and blue skin seemed to shine like a rising moon.

"Now for some serious pinochle," Charley said.

He drank his coffee slowly. "You two start without me, I'll be along."

"You can't play two-handed pinochle," Charley said.

"Play canasta for a while," he said.

When he entered the club car the blonde was still sitting alone. In the chair on her right a heavy young man wearing a good grey suit watched her from the corner of his eye. The chair on her left was empty. He sat down.

"No card game?" she asked.

"Didn't feel much like it," he said. He looked for a waiter but the single attendant in the car did not seem to be able to see him. He said to the blonde, "What did you say you do?"

"Designer," she said. "Fashion and all that."

"So am I," he said, "buildings and all that."

She smiled. "We have something in common."

He felt her close beside him as if her body were covered with small fingers that reached and touched him. Perfume cascaded over him like the hot water this morning down his naked body. And he was conscious of his body as if he were in front of his bathroom mirror. He saw that her blue shoes had small blue bows on them.

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"You're very beautiful," he said, "did you know?"

"Yes, I know, do you mind?"

He waved his arm toward the window. "It's all copper out there. In the sky I mean. And the houses."

He looked out the window to show her how copper it was but it was no longer copper at all. The buildings had faded into darkness. The fields were a faint blue-grey. The lights of the houses were small and remote. All the copper was gone, and the dark sky had gone with the copper. Only a dark night.

"Do you have a light?"

She was holding a cigarette. She leaned toward him, the cigarette between her fingers, and he saw on the slender fingers the faint brown stains of a heavy smoker.

"Of course," he said. "Just a moment, I . . . know . . . I think I have . . ." His fingers searched through his pockets. There were no matches. No matches in his pockets anywhere, and no matches on the small metal table in front of him. "I'm sorry, I'm afraid I never learned to smoke. Never felt the need somehow. I . . ."

The young man in the grey suit who sat on her right snapped his lighter and it blazed into flame.

He said to the blonde, "I think the young man there . . ."

She turned and bent for the light, the flame. A blue back toward the flame. Smoke billowing up about her bent head. And he heard her thank the young man. The young man said something and waved in the air and the waiter hurried forward. The blonde was smiling and talking to the young man. Outside the window in the night a small village sparkled with distant points of light. He was smiling at his face in the window. The town vanished as the train rushed on. He looked at his watch. His wife would probably be at the movies now if she had managed to send the children somewhere. In the balcony and ten rows back. Someday he would have to ask her why she liked the balcony. She had probably told him once but he could not remember. Perhaps she was a little farsighted. After a few minutes he got up and walked back to his compartment where the young man from Dupont and Charley were waiting for him.

3

It had been a successful trip, the building sold and the plans all decided, and he did not wake up until the train back from

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Chicago was passing through Trenton. Charley lay in his bed smoking a morning cigarette in half-awake contentment. When Charley saw that he was awake, Charley grinned and patted his bloated belly and said, "Gone to pot. Gone all the way to pot, eh Johnny?" Smoking and patting the belly that had once been flat, and there was something close to satisfaction in Charley's voice.

He said, "Did you ever notice I don't smoke?"

"You're lucky," Charley said. "The first one always tastes like the floor of a barn."

"But I wonder why I don't smoke?"

"Because you never started, that's easy."

"Why didn't I start? Everyone I know smokes. Why not me? Why didn't I ever feel the need?"

"Hell, start thinking like that and you'll go crazy," Charley said, "let's eat."

After Newark, he sat and drank his coffee and looked down at the black water of the Hackensack River and then out across the Jersey Flats where tall towers of burning gas stood high above the distant refineries. Towers like burning beacons above the salt marshes and city dumps and rows of billboards. In the distance, faint above the cliffs of the Palisades, he saw the hazy towers of New York. As if the city and the burning flames were reaching for something unseen in the sky. And just before the train went into the dark of the tunnel beneath the river he saw the flashing red neon signs of the Federal Container Corp. Signs that meant New York and home. Signs that had always meant New York and, soon, his home. And all he could think of now was that the signs would be there flashing red day and night long after he was dead.

"Here we are," Charley said as the train slowed to a stop in the dingy station. "Might as well report to J.J. and get the brawl over with."

They reported to J. J. Salisbury. And it was a brawl. And when it was over he declined an invitation to lunch from J. J. Angry, he declined lunch and sat alone in his office. The main office beyond his closed door was quiet and almost empty. He had not been in the office at lunchtime for many years. Too many years. Quiet and peaceful. And sunk in silence, his eyes closed, he tried to think of nothing at all so that his anger would calm. Thinking of nothing until his hand moved. Aware that his right hand had

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moved as if reaching for something on the desk in front of him. He opened his eyes and looked at his hand. He looked at the desk. His book. A long time ago. When he was a young man who worked hard and ate his lunch in the office. There had always been a book. A novel, or a book of philosophy, or even a book of poems. Always a book and he had forgotten. Not even remembering when it had stopped, when the first day had come when there was not a book on his desk. But his hand had remembered. The quiet of a lunchtime office. He put on his jacket and left the office.

In Brentano's on Fifth Avenue he walked slowly up and down the rows of books. So many books and so many years. He finally chose *The Town,* by Faulkner, because he remembered reading Faulkner. And on his way back to the office he stopped in a delicatessen to buy his lunch. He stood at the end of the line that waited to buy and read the menu on the wall. He decided on roast beef with swiss cheese on white bread, a large container of coffee, and a french cruller. A woman walked past him to the head of the line and gave her order. The counterman began to fill her order. He stared at the woman. She turned her head and grinned at the people who stood waiting. He was staring so hard that he did not notice a man in a tweed coat push past him and up to the counter until the man was giving his order. A sharp wave of anger. He pushed forward.

"Hey! Stop the shovin'!"

He was at the counter beside the man who had cheated the line.

"Roast beef and swiss cheese on white," he said.

The counterman looked at him. "I got a order, just hold it."

He said, "This pig bucked the line! I want a roast beef with swiss cheese on. . . "

"Hold your water," the man who had cheated said.

"Do you always cheat?" He faced the man. "Are you just stupid, or were your parents cheats, too? I suppose where you come from everyone is a cheating pig!"

"Go to hell," the man said.

And someone pushed him. In a fury he pushed hard in return and heard a voice behind him swear. A sharp blow struck his back. He turned with his hands raised to punch whoever had hit him and found himself facing a red-faced middle-aged woman. His heart was pounding with his rage and he held onto the counter. Then he pushed through the crowd of waiting people and out

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into the street. The street seemed to be shaking before his eyes. The pigs! The animal bastards! The whole street moved before him and the pigs did not deserve to be alive. Cheat and lie and push to get a sandwich two minutes sooner. The stupid goddamned bastards! The whole goddamned cheating, lying, pushing world!

Too angry to work, he sat in his office for the rest of the afternoon. Sat behind his closed door with his feet on his desk. And at five o'clock he knew he was not going to catch the 5:20 for Connecticut. He called his wife. He told her he was going to a meeting. She was not happy but she did not question him. She would never question him. It would never cross her mind that he might be telling her a lie. But why not, everyone else did.

At five-thirty Charley looked into his office. "Gonna make the 6:15?"

"Can't," he said.

"Okay slave, see you tomorrow."

After Charley had gone the silence of the empty office began to oppress him. He left his desk and walked out into the large main office. All the desks were clean and empty. One of his own rules, *Nothing is to be left on a desk at night. The desks will be clean and devoid of all encumbrances other than a pen and ink stand, a calendar, and a memo pad with the top page clean and unused.* How long? When the books had stopped being there on his desk and when he had become the man who could write rules like those. When? Three long rows of neat desks as clean and sterile as the rows of tombstones in a military cemetery. And as he stepped through the office his footsteps struck sharp and echoing on his ears. He turned back into his office and shut the door.

He had been sitting in his chair for a long time when the young man came into his office. Just sitting there with no sense of time and wondering what a free man could do in New York on a Monday night. His door opened and a young man walked in.

"Oh . . . I'm sorry, sir. Didn't know you were still here. I need MacDonald's address. You said I should go, the open house? I don't have the address."

"MacDonald? 445 Madison Avenue, tenth floor." He studied the young man. "How are things going, Sasso? Like it here?"

"Yessir, very much."

"Why?"

"What, sir?"

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He said, "Why do you like it here."

Young Sasso blinked, unsure of what to say. "Well, the pay's good, the work's fine, there's a future."

Sasso said more, but he stopped listening. He knew all the words. MacDonald Bros., Contractors. The company did occasional business with them. He clicked them off in his mind. Size, medium. Reliability, fair. Fees, average, Work, good but not spectacular.

He said, "Do you think MacDonald would mind a gate crasher?"

"You, sir? They'd die happy."

He laughed, "It's good to keep in touch. And stop calling me sir. If you can't make it John, try Mr. Cashmore."

"All right, Mr. Cashmore."

"That's better. Eddie, isn't it? All right, Eddie, let's make the MacDonalds happy. Maybe you'll have dinner with me later."

4

He stood near the window that overlooked Park Avenue and the distant East River. The blue-grey buildings of Brooklyn were still visible in the setting sun. John MacDonald was talking.

". . . damned glad you could make it. I've been meaning to call you about that project of yours over in Newark, the middle-income semi-detached. Now it's a big job, I admit, we couldn't handle all of it, but I think our price for the . . ."

Birnbaum, the junior partner since old MacDonald had died, hovered on the far side of the room watching them. They were not glad to see him. Pushing for business. Nothing more. Taking advantage of an unexpected opportunity. Pushing ahead in the goddamned line to get their goddamned sandwich.

He said, "MacDonald, I came here to have a few drinks."

"Jesus, kick me! How's the drink? No more business, a man's got to relax, eh? Later maybe we'll talk. Another drink coming up."

Young Sasso was talking to Birnbaum now. Business. Young Sasso was glad he, the boss, was there. It gave Sasso a lot more importance. A young man getting ahead, and if they thought he was important enough to be with the boss it wouldn't hurt Sasso. Someone handed him a fresh drink. Outside the window it was dark now. All the lights of the great city spread out against the darkness.

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"Hello," the girl said. A small, thin brunette. A round face and large breasts under a tight green blouse.

"Good evening," he said.

"I'm Ruth Wizbicki. I work here."

"John Cashmore," he said.

"I know. Do you like these parties? I don't, too crowded."

"Then why do you come?"

She laughed. "You kidding? I work here, I said. Command performance, you know how it is. You're nice, you know?"

"Thank you," he said.

"I'm starved, are you? Let's go somewhere."

"Well. . ."

"Oh it's okay, the boss said I should. We can go to the Town House and charge it to the company."

He felt a hand on his shoulder. John MacDonald stood beside him. MacDonald was grinning.

"You and Ruthie doin' all right? Why don't you two go get some dinner, party's breaking up anyway. I tell you, John, I'd take you myself but I promised the wife I'd be home. I owe Ruthie a dinner anyway, you can fill in and bill it to me." And MacDonald winked at him.

The girl said, "He's cuter than you anyway, Mr. MacDonald."

"That does it," MacDonald said. "Powder your nose and don't keep the man waiting."

Both the girl and MacDonald seemed to vanish. He knew, of course, what the girl was really offering. Or perhaps she wasn't offering that. Perhaps she was only offering a dinner and some small talk for a lonely businessman. And maybe MacDonald had not winked again before he vanished somewhere in the room where everyone was leaving now. But he would never know what the girl was offering, or whether MacDonald had winked at him again or not. He realized that when he was walking rapidly down the stairs of the building. He told himself that he should turn back and at least find out what the girl was offering. But he walked on down the ten long flights of silent stairs and out into Madison Avenue. On the Avenue he turned north toward Grand Central Station. He walked through the bright night streets and wondered how much MacDonald had planned to pay the girl. Or was a free dinner and a chance to please the boss payment enough? Maybe she was a professional on call for the purpose. Maybe she was just

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a lonely girl who wanted a man to talk to, perhaps to love. At least to hold if nothing more. But not like that. Not for any woman and not for him. Never like that. Love like pushing for a sandwich in a delicatessen. And he seemed to see the blonde from the train. Standing in front of him and moving just ahead of him and speaking to him. *You don't make the rules. She knows what she's doing and she wants to do it. At least she's alive.*

He reached out to touch the blonde, saying aloud, "I don't want her, I want you."

The blonde seemed to sneer at him. *You couldn't do it. It's not in you. It's too late for you and it always has been.* And the blonde laughed at him.

He said aloud, "Don't laugh! I'll learn to smoke!"

Two men stopped to stare at him, but he was watching the blonde float before his eyes. She was still laughing. *You can't even order a sandwich and get it!*

He tried to touch her again, but she floated backwards just out of reach. She seemed to be floating there forever in the night filled with the rush of passing taxis. Just out of his reach. Taunting him past people who stared at him and cursed as he bumped into them. Floating there until she suddenly turned into a tavern. He followed her into the tavern.

"What'll it be?"

The bartender was small and dark and needed a shave. He stood at the bar and blinked at the waiting bartender. The blonde was gone.

"You want something, mister?"

He looked for the blonde. The tavern was a long, bare room with a white tile floor and long rows of bottles on the shelves. Four men in the bar were watching him. But the blonde was not there.

"No," he said. "Sorry, I don't want anything."

Behind him as he walked out he heard the bartender say something and heard the other men laugh. In the street he turned north again. And walked into Grand Central Station. In the station he called his wife. He told her he would be home in an hour. On the empty train he sat near a window and looked out because he had forgotten to buy a newspaper or anything else to read. The trip seemed longer than he remembered and the stations seemed strange, unfamiliar. It had been so long since he had looked out

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the window on this train. Or maybe it was the whole night. All the small suburban stations were dark and deserted and somehow impermanent as if they and all the towns did not belong to the land but only sat precariously on it ready to blow away in the next wind storm. At his station his wife was waiting with the car. He kissed her and as they drove up the hill he sat and looked across the valley, but all the white houses were only pinpoints of light in windows of rooms that held nothing but all the people like himself.

"Did something go wrong at the meeting?"

"No," he said.

"Where's the newspaper?"

"I forgot it."

"You could have told me, I'd have bought one."

"I'm sorry, I forgot it."

"All right," she said, "don't tell me what's wrong."

In the house he walked to the liquor cabinet and poured a long Scotch on the rocks. He drank it and poured a second. He drank the second one slowly, waiting for the first to begin to affect him. She was hanging up her coat in silence.

"Have a drink?" he asked her.

"The children will be home soon."

"What should I do, cheer?"

She turned on the television and sat in her armchair to watch. He poured another Scotch. A quiz show. Idiots with memories answering questions. For ten thousand dollars what two men won the Most Valuable Player award three times in the National League? Stan Musial and Roy Campanella, he said to himself, pay me the ten thousand dollars. Entertainment!

He said, "In college I always walked up to the front of the lunch line and had a friend buy my lunch for me. I hate people who cheat lines."

"Then why did you do it?" But her eyes were still watching the television set.

"You really want to know?"

Her head turned sharply. "I don't know what went wrong tonight, or in Chicago, or wherever it was, but I don't have to put up with your mood! I'm trying to watch television, do you mind?"

He gulped his whisky. "I damn near quit today. Do you know that?"

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She stood and walked to the television and turned it off. Then she stood looking at him. "All right, John. You haven't told me what it is, but it doesn't matter, it's always something. There's something wrong with your job, or this house, or your children, or our friends, or me. Old J.J. is a cheap bastard. Mary is too conformist. I'm not sexual enough. There's always something. Tell me, John, what was it you wanted so much? I think it's time I knew, I've had to live with it just about long enough!"

He sat down. On the edge of the couch and turning his glass of whisky in his hand as if he could learn something from the feel of the glass itself. But it was only a glass of whisky he raised and drank from.

"I wanted to be a pirate."

"I'm not joking!"

He nodded. *I never wanted to push and cheat and lie to save three minutes and get ahead. I never did, and Oh God if I only could.* "There were two kids. One of them wanted to be a vice president before he was forty. Maybe even president, own his own company. The other kid wanted to really do something. He didn't know what. Maybe he just wanted to sit in the sun and read a book all day. Neither of them could make it." And he brushed hard at his eyes with the hand that was not holding the glass. The tears poured down his face while his mouth smiled at her. She came to hold his face against her breasts. He smelled her body and her hair. Her hands were soft on his face.

"John! What is it? Please, darling, the children."

He raised his head. "Is it such a terrible thing for them to see their father cry? Maybe they should see that more often." He smiled at her. "Well, what do you suggest? Woodworking in the cellar? Amateur theatrics? Cold showers three times a day? Raise mink? Run ten miles a day?" And he rested his head against her breasts again. "I really do love you."

His face against her breasts, and he felt her arms go around him, and he did love her, but it was the face of the blue blonde in the sky over Pennsylvania he saw in his mind. He wanted the blue blonde. And he wanted to chop down all the old oaks in Connecticut, and he wanted to spit in J.J.'s pompous face, and he wanted to quit his job, and he wanted to learn to smoke. Nothing was going to change any of that. Not the love of his wife, not all the full and busy hours of the world.

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ROGER SALE

England's Parnassus: C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams and J. R. R. Tolkien

About the time of T. S. Eliot's great withdrawal, between *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1926) and *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), a group of writers already withdrawn into orthodox Christianity were beginning to become known as an alternative to holding the center. They sought to replace the humanistic with the pious, the broad public appeal of the novel with the more private iconography of fantasy, the New with the Old. Charles Williams began to command an audience larger than coterie size with *War in Heaven* (1930) and *The English Poetic Mind* (1932), and in the next decade produced vast amounts of work: poems, plays, novels, and criticism. Dorothy Sayers was writing mystery stories as early as 1922 but reached her peak with the series of Lord Peter Wimsey stories that appeared, one a year, between *Strong Poison* (1930) and *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937). C. S. Lewis had published two pseudonymous poems in the twenties but did not secure his position as more-than-just-another-don until *The Allegory of Love* (1936) and *The Problem of Pain* (1940). J. R. R. Tolkien delivered his seminal lecture on *Beowulf* in 1936 and followed that with *The Hobbit* two years later. So far as I know these writers were not identified with each other before the war, but they met often when Williams moved to Oxford in 1939 and, two years after Williams' death in 1945, the others, along with Owen Barfield, Gervase Mathew, and W. H. Lewis, published a collection of essays in his honor.

Withdrawals and small groups are the hallmark of the modern literary landscape so it is perhaps not surprising that this group, Anglo-Oxford as it is usually called now, was not identified as a coterie until after it ceased to function as a living concern. Lawrence left England in 1919 to carry out his cheerful and terrifying trek. Bloomsbury looked at itself, smiled, shuddered, and ignored

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the world. Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells sold out for money and popular acclaim. Ford Madox Ford held the center long enough to complete the Tietjens series, then settled for hackwork, Provence, and America. E. M. Forster finished *A Passage to India* and lapsed into silence and belles-lettres. In the background one cult after another flourished and subsided, from the latter day Golden Dawn to A. E. Waite and J. W. Dunne. In the twenties much of the news came from the *Transatlantic* Parisians, and in the thirties it came from Spain and the Oxford Poetic Renascence. In such a climate the traditional novel was transformed and poetry became the province of many small groups. The determinedly Christian had little trouble gaining a position, but they could hardly stand out easily as a unit. But, perhaps aided by Eliot's publicized turn to the Church and certainly by the circumstances which brought them together during the war, Anglo-Oxford outlasted the leftists and, with Auden himself as an ally, they moved into prominence, were called names by F. R. Leavis, and have since been one of the Establishment's brighter jewels.

Anyone who attempts a disinterested assessment of such a group is faced with a great gap lying between determined admiration and indifferent detraction. Those who agree with Anglo-Oxford find any criticism insulting, and those who attack it find in any praise a sign of softness and giving in. In *Poetry and Personal Responsibility* Brother George Every begins, "This book is intended as an introduction to contemporary poetry, considered as the sensitive spot in the modern mind, where a new response to life, a new outlook on the world, is taking shape." This sentence, when translated, means simply that the people Brother George Every knows think Charles Williams is a great poet. So Dr. Leavis replies, "To pass off his [Williams'] writings as spiritually gratifying is to promote the opposite of spiritual health." It is the nature of such gaps to grow larger rather than smaller with time, so the sooner the characteristics and merits of Anglo-Oxford are explored, the more likely the gap can eventually be closed.[1]

[1] I have excluded Dorothy Sayers from further consideration because her work seems to me as pretentious and smug as her most vehement assailants allege. Lord Peter Wimsey is the best of all possible reasons for people not to like detective stories. Owen Barfield is far more interesting and worthy of attention he has not been paid, and I exclude him only because his work needs to be discussed in terms inappropriate for the others.

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C. S. Lewis is the propagandist for Anglo-Oxford and for the Old things it defends—medieval and Renaissance literature, classical education, traditional Christianity, Merrie England, bread and honey, relaxed, "gentlemanly" manners. Needless to say, a taste for any or all of these things does not implicate one; it is only when a fortress is built of these elements that spiritual membership in Anglo-Oxford is assured. The fortress has many ramparts, and Lewis has defended the more literary ones with zeal and often with intelligence and wit. But the further he strays from literature the more he resorts to the simply epigrammatic as a way of closing and oversimplifying debate. His claims for our attention are always the claims of the amateur against the rigidifying strictures of the professional, but without the check of professional learning he tends to be complacent and brilliant in the worst possible way. His works on the Bible and the Church, for instance, are ostensibly addressed to the sceptic or agnostic, but the fact is that they are only for the intellectually slack, would-be believer:

> I have stood by the bedside of a woman whose thigh-bone was eaten through with cancer and who had thriving colonies of the disease in many bones as well. It took three people to move her in bed. The doctors predicted a few months of life; the nurses (who should have known better), a few weeks. A good man laid his hands on her and prayed. A year later the patient was walking (uphill, too, through rough woodland) and the man who took the last X-ray photos was saying, "These bones are as solid as rock. It's miraculous." (*The World's Last Night,* pp. 3-4.)

Lewis goes on to say that prayer may have had nothing to do with the woman's recovery but the point is only strategic because the passage is not concerned with miracles but with a hierarchy of the Blessed that cannot be upset by any disclaimer. At the bottom of the hierarchy are the doctors, men of medicine and science who predict death resulting from cancerous bones. Then come the nurses, more mistaken than the doctors in this instance, but "who often know better" (Because they're women? Because they're more removed from deluding medical theories?). Next comes the "good man" who prays—not a priest with mumbo-jumbo, but just good folks. Finally, there is the invalid herself. Her reward is not health or spiritual growth, but Merrie England, a trip uphill through the bracken and gorse. In such a paragraph the argument is just

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camouflage; it is the details that count and they are as cozy as those of any contemporary writer.

Nor does the coziness disappear when Lewis returns to literature; but it does serve to illustrate in part an important point about Lewis and about criticism. One of the best known set-pieces in *The Allegory of Love* ends with this:

> Johnson once described the ideal happiness which he would choose if he were regardless of futurity. My own choice, with the same reservation, would be to read the Italian epic—to be always convalescent from some small illness and always seated in a window that overlooked the sea, there to read these poems eight hours of each happy day.

It is easy to see why F. W. Bateson once said that, if read at the right age, *The Allegory of Love* could transform one's ideas about poetry. The "right age" is twenty to twenty-four, the right occupation is graduate student. Then it often seems that it would be wonderful to be C. S. Lewis and love all those dusty books and retreat into a dream world of childhood and Ariosto. But this paragraph makes clear that for Lewis reading is in itself enjoyable, and in this respect he is almost unique among recent critics. Eliot or Richards or Leavis know far better than he what literature is, what it is for, how to speak of it. But Lewis offers the amateur's reply in such a way as to make us remember we are all amateurs. He speaks of the feel and the taste of a work, he sensuously enjoys the imagination of another person. Even though Lewis is a don, his appeal as a critic is as an amateur.

It may be that someone who insists that to sense imaginatively is of primary importance will end up as a cultist, but to restrict the imaginatively possible to the critically viable is only to be a member of a different cult. Those whose business is literature have a fairly clear sense of the corpus of works with which they are engaged, but the amateur heeds no bounds. Children's books, fantasies, and mystery stories can be enjoyed sensuously as much as novels, plays, and poems. Furthermore, autobiography, travel books, journalism, literary criticism itself are also imaginative and can be tasted and felt. Good writers on politics and science have their special flavor—Konrad Lorenz, Toynbee, and Leonard Woolley have built apprehendable worlds with words. The professional, who tends to be quizzical or scornful at the suggestion that

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literary essays might be written about *The House at Pooh Corner* or Jim Brosnan's *The Long Season,* implicitly pays homage to the amateur when the era in question is sufficiently past—Thomas Browne, Gibbon, and Thoreau are now safely ensconced as materials of professionals. Lewis' insistence on reading as a self-contained experience makes clear that cults, ingroups, and amateur societies are almost always the result of professional scholars and critics being too narrow about what counts and what does not. When professionals get snooty, admirers are practically forced into being cranky, and, finally, cranks.

Lewis himself has never argued the point quite this way because usually he seems to want to replace New taste with Old rather than to liberate all taste. He is eloquent about the smell or feel of Rider Haggard or Spenser, but it is hard to imagine him doing the same for Ezra Pound or Kingsley Amis. In general the Older a work is, the more snugly Lewis will wrap it in the insulation of Anglo-Oxford: ". . . for this universe, which has produced the bee-orchid and the giraffe, has produced nothing stranger than Martianus Capella." Lewis knows that not one reader of *The Allegory of Love* in a thousand has read Martianus Capella and that that one reader probably knew no better than to find him dull. Here a taste for the Old is synonymous with a taste for C. S. Lewis. Yet if the author is only slightly less esoteric Lewis' method can be much more viable. It is common knowledge that Lewis always quotes the best lines of poems long since neglected, thereby making them seem better than they are. Yet the lines he quotes are usually as good as he says and his quotations often have guided reluctant readers into huge areas of Older Literature. Furthermore, to follow Lewis' tips in medieval and Renaissance literature—Lodge's *A Margarite of America,* Chapman's part of *Hero and Leander,* Harrington's Ariosto, some of Lydgate's minor poems—is to become aware of more than of how cunningly Lewis quotes. One does not need special sympathies with the Old to see that in simply traditional and next-to-forgotten works like these it is possible to discover many things about Older Literature that cannot be found in Chaucer or Spenser or in the special pleading of Lewis himself.

It is this contribution for which Lewis is best known, yet I think in many ways it is with works written after the periods of

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Lewis' special competence that he is most helpful. The last two centuries are filled with people who were Old before it was fashionable to be Old, traditional but in what was at the time the wrong tradition. Anyone primarily interested in main streams is bound to look on them as tributaries or even stagnant pools, and quite often Lewis seems to be recommending these authors simply because no one else would. George Macdonald, Chesterton, Kipling, and Haggard cannot be read in bulk by someone not originally sympathetic to their beliefs, but Lewis, just as he quotes the best lines, names the best books, and I, for one, am grateful for having been put on to *Lilith* and *The Man Who Was Thursday* and have heard others express gratitude for having been led to the best of William Morris and E. R. Eddison. I found an ever stranger tale, David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus,*[2] even better; it is a really haunting and original book and one, incidentally, that makes Lewis' own space fantasies seem tinny and preacherly. The moment I read one book as good as this, it became clear there might be others, all being treasured by faddists and kept resolutely sheltered from the people of the daylight. By contrast, Eliot's tips like John Bramhall or Edward Arnold, or Dr. Leavis' like L. H. Myers and *Mr. Weston's Good Wine,* have resolutely turned away at least one hopeful reader.

Finally, as a corollary to Lewis' doctrine of imaginative apprehension, comes an idea that probably could have been forcefully stated only by someone inside a withdrawn world. It is possible, he says, to have a great work that is not, in the usual sense, even decently written. Such a notion can be made the cornerstone of a defense of ignorance or tastelessness, but it need not be. As any careful reader looks back into a work to see what it was that made him respond as he did, he begins to focus on the author's way with words, on the motion from sentence to sentence and from scene to scene. This is analysis, and some authors get better the longer we linger. Others, however, seem to defy this careful examination of word and sentence. Even when the words are written by Rosemary Edmonds, *Anna Karenina* is obviously a great novel. Yet page by page it all seems flat and to focus on a passage to discover the source of the magic is to become baffled and confused. No one would mistake a page of Tolstoi for a page of Arnold Bennett, yet often the terms one sees used to describe Tol-

[2] Published for the first time in the U. S. by Macmillan in 1963.

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stoi's greatness are equally applicable to Bennett, and Tolstoi, by and large, has eluded the literary analyst.

I think this fact is at least part of the reason for the phenomenon now crudely called myth criticism. This criticism has endeavored to move away from the particular pages of a work and to illuminate it by means of analogues with other literature, legends, and myths—Lord Jim is a *miles gloriosus* rather than the instrument of torture for Marlow's sentences. But analogues are only analogues and myth criticism, at least as it seems to have evolved, is not really criticism at all because it has no means to evaluate a particular work. Lewis, however, has a particular way of using the word "myth" so that it can be applied critically:

> Most myths were made in prehistoric times and, I suppose, not consciously made by individuals at all. But every now and then there occurs in the modern world a genius—a Kafka or a Novalis—who can make such a story. Macdonald is the greatest genius of this kind whom I know. But I do not know how to classify such genius. To call it literary genius seems unsatisfactory since it can co-exist with great inferiority in the art of words—nay, since its connection with words at all turns out to be merely external and, in a sense, accidental. . . . It begins to look as if there were an art, or a gift, which criticism has largely ignored. . . . It goes beyond the expression of things we have already felt. It arouses in us sensations we have never had before, never anticipated having, as though we had broken out of our normal mode of consciousness and 'possessed joy not promised to our birth'. It gets under our skin, hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are reopened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives. (*George Macdonald: An Anthology,* pp. 20-21.)

Here the term "myth" means something like "story," and refers not to myths in the technical sense—Prometheus or Wotan—but to any story which awakens us as earlier myths are said to have awakened earlier people. To speak this way is to be the opposite of analytical because it is to argue from effects rather than causes. It is the amateur's way of arguing, but only the narrowest professional will contend it can be refuted. In point of fact it tells us what we all know—that some works we most admire (if often secretly) seem to defy analysis.

Beyond the word "story" Lewis cannot take us except to name the works whose stories or myths he finds best. Lewis is an ama-

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teur and characteristically he can help us very little with a particular work. The first three chapters of *The Allegory of Love* place Chaucer beautifully, but the discussion of *Troilus and Criseyde* adds little more. *A Preface to Paradise Lost* is very fine on epics and Hierarchy, but wilfully distorts the poem itself. Over and over Lewis leads the curious reader to the right books and often by the right route, but then, like many dons who share his assumptions, he imagines that "any schoolboy" can do the rest. Thus he allows his cultural narrowness to obliterate the essential distinction between writer and reader. Behind everything Lewis writes is the idea "If *I* like it, *it* is good." Of course many literary judgments begin with a blurring of writer and reader such as this; we are all amateurs. But where Lewis stops intellectual responsibility begins. Lewis has opened up a world, larger than most, that needs challengers and explorers. But in this world of "story" and sensuous apprehension distinctions need to be made as they do in any world, and they must be made in ways, unlike Lewis', that seek to make criticism the common pursuit of people who may wildly disagree with each other. Anything does not go.[3]

One of the things that does not go (for me at least) is the work of Charles Williams. To judge from what appears in print most sympathizers with Anglo-Oxford think Williams is its ruling genius and final justification, and that his greatest work is to be found in his cycle of Arthurian lyrics, *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*. Williams wrote so much that to focus on two relatively short books is bound to seem unjust, yet for our purposes they have an advantage beyond their being among Williams' best work. Lewis has written a commentary to these poems which allows us, by juxtaposing text and comment, to begin to see what literary criticism can do to justify its existence in the face of stubborn imaginations.

These poems, like everything Williams wrote, are extremely ritualistic, and from them one can understand Lewis' remarks (in the Preface to the *Essays Presented to Charles Williams)* that Williams might better have lived in an age when people wore capes and fought duels. It is best to begin with a passage to show

[3] This essay was written before Lewis' death last November. Without wanting to alter the above, I should like to honor his special but very real contribution and to express regret that he did not live to explore further the problems of narrative that fascinated him and that stand so much in need of greater attention.

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how this ritualism works and how Lewis comments on it. Williams' syntax is generally far from lucid, so I have chosen a relatively easy passage to start with:

> Talaat ibn Kula of Ispahan
> taught me the measurement of man
> that Euclid and Archimedes showed
> ere I took the Western road
> across the strait of the Spanish seas.
> Through the green-pennon-skirted Pyrenees,
> from the sharp curved line of the Prophet's blade
> that cuts the Obedience from the Obeyed,
> I came to the cross-littered land of Gaul.
> Gospels trigonometrical
> Measured the height of God-in-man.
>
> ("The Coming of Palomides")

Lewis' long comment begins as follows:

> Islam denies the Incarnation. It will not allow that God has descended into flesh or that Man has been exalted into Deity. It is the "sharp curved line of the Prophet's blade that cuts the Obedience from the Obeyed." It stands for all religions that are afraid of matter and afraid of mystery, for all misplaced reverences and misplaced purities that repudiate the body and shrink back from the glowing materialism of the Grail. (*Arthurian Torso,* p. 124.)

Lewis may seem to be making rather much of Williams' lines, but something like this explanation is needed. Lewis does not hesitate to call "Talaat ibn Kula of Ispahan" simply "Islam," but if this substitution isn't made then the lines about the Prophet's blade, which are obviously important, will come to be simply ornament, a decorative term for Arabia. Williams is constantly working like this, naming a thing briefly and later implicitly indicating that the name is meant to stand for some larger conception, and it would be very easy to get lost in such a poet without a guide. But still, the passage is pernicious.

The curious alliance of Euclid and Archimedes with Talaat ibn Kula of Ispahan implies that the limitations of one are like the limitations of the other. Euclid measured man and is taught by Islam; the Gospels, on the other hand, measured God-in-man as taught by Christianity. By making "the measurement of man"

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analogous to the measurement of God-in-man Williams has tried to make Euclid and Archimedes fools. Euclid measured lines and angles, not man, as Williams implies, so he can also imply that the Moslem teaches the geometry of Euclid rather than the trigonometry of the Gospels. The Moslems foolishly measure the wrong thing, but only because Williams has compared apples and oranges.

The force of the passage is placed squarely on this opposition of good Christians against bad Moslems and misguided Greeks. The Moslems are wrong because they "cut the Obedience from the Obeyed." In normal usage this "cutting" is both necessary and good; the obedience of the obeyer is always "cut" from the obeyed and few parents or judges, no matter how fond they are of the paradox that they "are" the child or the criminal, ever supposed otherwise. But Williams assumes the cutting to be bad because he believes in the Incarnation, the mystical joining of obedience and obeyed. He supports or explains this assumption only with the specious conceit of Euclid's geometry and Christianity's trigonometry. The trigonometry of the Trinity is neatly implied as adding a "new dimension" to Euclid (one totally missed or misunderstood by Islam), yet I cannot imagine Williams or Lewis seriously undertaking to say just what the trigonometry of the Trinity is.

Williams, then, uses his symbols as icons. He knows, Lewis knows, any good Christian knows, without going further, that it is disastrous to "cut" the Obedience from the Obeyed. But I do not know this, and it is the province of the imagination to make me understand that a thing is so regardless of what I personally believe. I do not have to believe that "Now above the sky He's king" in order to understand the line that asserts it. But an icon, and "Gospels trigonometrical" is nothing if not that, is not meant to be understood imaginatively; it is only a reminder of a truth already believed in. The Christian knows before he reads Williams that Islam is, in Lewis' words, "strong, noble, venerable; yet radically mistaken," so "cuts the Obedience from the Obeyed" is only a reminder of this fact. Only someone who knows what he will find before he starts looking will make of Williams' passage what Lewis has made of it. When Williams first mentions Broceliande, one of the key places in the poem, Lewis steps in and says, "Now let me explain this rather difficult matter to you."

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He then offers what no one simply looking at Williams' lines could have figured out by himself. In some poetry we do need to have symbols explained just as in others we need a dictionary or some knowledge of history. But once the explanation is clear, presumably the lines must make their own imaginative sense. But in iconography the final justification rests not in the image but in the system of which it is a part. The clarity of Williams' imagery is really a sham; only the system is clear. Lewis' whole point about the imagination is that it begins with an apprehension of the poet's world, and Williams' poems simply cannot be read this way.

The distinction between poetry and iconography is of course not absolute and everyone draws the line between the two at a different point. Some, for intance, will come on a passage like the following and snort with derision:

> she cannot like such a snorting alien love
> galloped from a dusky horizon it has no voice
> to explain, nor the silver horn pirouetting above
> her bosom—a ghostly threat but no way to rejoice
> in released satiation; her body without delight
> chill-curdled, and the gruesome horn only to be
> polished, its rifling rubbed between breasts.
>
> ("Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn")

The phallicism is obscene and Williams laughable in his enjoyment of the thing he says is horrifying. Lewis' solemn disquisition on Williams' doctrine of the chaste poet only adds to the farce. The would-be admirer may not laugh, but he can hardly avoid embarrassment because even though the girl does not "rejoice in released satiation" Williams obviously is releasing feelings here which come closer to satisfying than to horrifying the poet. Robert Conquest (in "The Art of the Enemy," *Essays in Criticism*, 1957) uses more arcane passages than those I have chosen to make a case for Williams' imagination as a totalitarian one which substituted cruelty for justice. He was right, I think, and those who rebuked him made a pathetic spectacle of themselves. But in the present context the point can and must be made a little differently. What Mr. Conquest calls "totalitarian" I have been calling "iconographic." If the two are not the same they are certainly similar.

If the reader of Williams does not believe in his version of Christianity, then almost everything in the cycle tends to seem cheap,

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as in the passage about Islam, or silly, as in the passage about the unicorn. To use Lewis' terms, Williams' myth can "awaken" us only in extra-literary and unimaginative ways. For even if we attempt to move within Williams' inner circle and try to see just what he tells us to see, the result is imaginatively defeating. The system, as Lewis presents it and insofar as I can discover it in the poems themselves, is thoroughly worked out, so that after the reader has gotten used to plugging the right meanings in the right places, he can snugly careen through the universe, secure in the knowledge that what would baffle someone on the outside is really in perfect working order:

> Presaging intelligence of time climbed,
> Merlin climbed, through the dome of Stephen,
> over chimneys and churches; from the point of Camelot
> he looked through the depth to the dome of Sophia;
> the kingdom and the power and the glory chimed.
> ("The Crowning of Arthur")

It is easy to learn that Byzantium, and thus Hagia Sophia, is Williams' image of the Heavenly City, and so the prophetic Merlin can look at London and see both it and Byzantium. But the outsider is still perplexed by the last line: when and where was this chime? why did it chime then? since when did Hagia Sophia have chimes? These questions are all legitimate and unanswerable; the insider ignores rather than answers because, beyond reading and problems, he knows that the chimes sound hollow in the kingdom of Arthur and full in the Kingdom of Heaven. His final assertion is the epitome of cultist declarations: I praise the vehicle because it is so hard to operate but I have mastered it.

But if Williams must be classified as iconography, it must be added that the fault is endemic to much modern literature. There is no better proof of this than the criticism of that literature, which has been largely devoted to the same kind of explanation that Lewis offers here—it explains by abstracting an intellectual system from the book and then rigidly imposes the system back on the book to make it work. Yeats and Joyce are perhaps the most obvious examples of this, though of course both offer much to the imaginative, unbelieving reader to whom Williams offers almost nothing. But Faulkner's cult of bear-hunting is as icon-

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ographic as Williams' cult of Byzantium. Ike McCaslin goes to the woods with his gun to find the bear, but Sam Fathers tells him, "You will have to choose." So "he had left his gun; by his own will and relinquishment he had accepted not a gambit, not a choice, but a condition in which not only the bear's heretofore inviolable anonymity but all the ancient rules and balance of hunter and hunted had been abrogated." Ike must accept these conditions because the bear, moving in ways no less mysterious than God's, knows when Ike carries gun, compass, and watch. So too the reader of "The Bear" must accept not gambits but conditions, and must seek its author without watch or compass. But when the reader gives up watch and compass, he has no guard against giving in to his author and thus no way to maintain that impersonality without which criticism is impossible. Giving in to Faulkner, or to Joyce or Lawrence or Yeats or Eliot, may be far more rewarding than giving in to Charles Williams, but the activity is the same. It is not only *Taliessin through Logres* or the peace of God that is past all understanding.

The difference between Williams and the other writers mentioned lies primarily in the rigidity of his intellectual symbolic system. The reader determined to explore sympathetically and yet not give himself away is more easily defeated by Williams because the only way to read Williams at all is unresponsively and unimaginatively. This can be seen most easily by comparing Williams with Eliot. Many who believe as Williams and Eliot believe have implied that Eliot's stature in the market place is the result of the beneficent influence of Williams. Traces of that influence can be seen in many things Eliot has written since the middle thirties, but they can be most clearly detected in those places where Eliot has withdrawn into private language. Eliot perhaps seems more suspect to believers than Williams precisely because of those Old Possum qualities which make him so much more viable for agnostics. Williams' system is not simply hierarchical; it must be understood mechanically. Eliot, on the other hand, teases his reader in and out of belief, in and out of time, in and out of the stifling clarity of iconography. Theologically he may thus be more culpable, but it *is* possible to read *Four Quartets* at least without giving in. The rose garden, unlike Broceliande, can be walked into by almost anyone.

This much, in one sense, cannot be claimed for J. R. R. Tol-

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kien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Perhaps not everyone will be able to walk into Middle Earth, but it is clear that enough can and have to present a radical challenge to our usual responses to "invented worlds." The trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers,* and *The Return of the King,* was received when first published in 1954 and 1955 as slightly strange works usually are, with excited shouts and bored disclaimers. But not only has its audience increased steadily, the members of that audience are not those usually admiring of the cultish. We have come rather blandly to accept *Ulysses, The Rainbow* and *The Sound and the Fury* into the main arena of fiction because not to have done so would have meant excluding almost all this century prizes most highly. We have come to assume that Lawrence and Joyce and Faulkner offer much for anyone seriously interested in literature. But enforced acceptance has made many uneasy converts and very few would claim to feel genuinely at home in all the large worlds of our great writers. No one now reads *The Lord of the Rings* without wanting to, so it is precisely now that its critical challenge is best accepted. For Tolkien, though he is a securely withdrawn professor of philology and believer in the Old, confronts us, like nothing else even remotely Anglo-Oxford, with all the great problems of experiment, belief, obscurity, and imaginative apprehension that implicitly confront us, in ways grown easy through familiarity, in almost every first rate twentieth century writer.

For those to whom *The Lord of the Rings* is still unfamiliar, it is almost impossible to describe without secretly confirming ancient prejudices. It is about Middle Earth in the age before the age of men, and its great difference from our age lies in the aliveness of its world. Here are cities and plains inhabited by men, but also by dwarves and elves and wizards; here are magic and heroic song and princes who can heal; here the metaphors once derived from nature and now dead are capable of freshness and vitality—"Don't disturb it!" says Boromir when Frodo throws a stone into a dark pool, and "disturb" suddenly "comes to life" as "out from the water a long sinuous tentacle had crawled." Here shadows are not metaphors for evil, but the Nazgul, the nine riders corrupted by Sauron, himself a shadow and ruler of Mordor. Here all trees have not yet lapsed into sleep and those awake are shepherded by "tree-like" Ents who make the forest a place of growth rather than

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wood. The world is alive, and the story is the story of the ways in which it is called on to *be* alive when the shadows threaten and darkness grows powerful.

At the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring* all this is only dimly seen. In the Shire live small people known as Hobbits, an idle, orderly, ground-loving folk, very merrie and very English. Their lore is snug, reminiscent of *The Wind in the Willows,* for though they have heard of dwarves, elves, and even of the land of the Dark Lord, they ignore it because it is far away. Tolkien has chosen an unfortunate way to begin, for no repetitious statements about their complacence and no future knowledge of their place in the story can alter the fact that Tolkien is very fond of these cozy little people with their tobacco and beer and good humor. Tolkien is as aware as anyone of all that needs be said against them, but he is, at the outset, too withdrawn to care.

But soon an old gray wizard named Gandalf comes to tell Frodo Baggins that Frodo owns a ring fashioned ages before that can govern all the rings of power:

> Three rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
> Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
> Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
> One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
> In the Land of Mordor where the shadows lie.
> One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
> One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
> In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

Sauron, the Dark Lord, was defeated but not destroyed long before, and now he is regaining strength and seeking the One Ring that can bind all unbound things. But because the ring can only bind and destroy it must be burned in Mordor, where it was first fashioned. Frodo listens to Gandalf, then asks:

> "You are wise and powerful. Will you not take the Ring?"
> "No," cried Gandalf, springing to his feet. "With that power I should have power too great and terrible. And over me the Ring would gain a power still greater and more deadly."

So Frodo must go himself, on a quest to a place he has never heard of, to destroy a ring whose power he can only guess. Even now the nine mortal men doomed to die are moving into the Shire to seek the ring, so Frodo sets out with three other hobbits.

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He discovers that the ring grows heavier the farther he goes and once he puts it on in order to become invisible and avoid the Riders. But they, servants of the ring, only find him more easily and wound him. Guided now by Strider, one of the wandering Rangers, the hobbits finally bring Frodo to Rivendell, home of the now faded elven-man Elrond, where Frodo rests and regains his strength. A council has been called at which Elrond and Gandalf tell the earlier history of the struggle against Sauron and where Frodo formally accepts the task of bearing the ring to Mordor. With him goes a fellowship consisting of the three other hobbits, a dwarf, an elf, a man, Strider, and Gandalf. The company moves south and east, through Moria, the ancient underground mountain home of the dwarves, where Gandalf is lost in a fight with a Balrog, and through Lothlorien, home of the elven-queen Galadriel, where time seems not to exist and "all that he saw was shapely, but the shapes seemed at once clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as if they had endured for ever." It is in Moria and Lothlorien that hobbits and readers first feel the ancientness of life, the largeness of the world and of the enemy that seeks to destroy it; Tolkien has now thrown off the claustrophobic spell of the Shire. The Company then moves down the Anduin, the river that divides Mordor from Gondor, the home of men. Boromir, who comes from Gondor, tries to persuade Frodo to return with him to his capital, Minas Tirith, but Frodo knows he must go straight to the volcanic Mount Doom. Boromir tries force and Frodo flees across the river, wearing the ring so as to be invisible and avoid both Boromir and the other hobbits, whom he feels he must not take with him. But Frodo's servant Sam figures out Frodo's plan and follows him as the others are left to ward off a sudden attack from orcs. So the company is broken and the first volumes ends.

One third is enough, however, to see what Tolkien's world is like and what kind of reader it implies. Two almost opposite mistakes are often made about "invented worlds." The first is made by people who should know better and is the result of forgetting that all literary worlds are invented. Most, indeed, take place within the geography of the earth, but many of these are far more removed from what we assume to be common life than Tolkien's Middle Earth. We do not have to go back to Milton

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or Blake to find worlds in which the air is harder to become used to. The larger figures of our own literature, Leopold Bloom and Rupert Birkin and Flem Snopes, should have accustomed us to seeing that Dublin and the estate of Thomas Crich and Yoknapatawpha, though they be in space and history ostensibly ours, are wild and foreign places indeed. What Leavis called the Great Tradition, it grows increasingly clear, is a phenomenon of the nineteenth century and we should be ready to see that Tolkien is only one more experimenter. Our great literature is in a way crank literature, almost all of it, and it makes improbable demands on our assumptions about the grammar of our sentences and lives. Tolkien is no more relying on the traditional images of traditional figures like dwarves and wizards than Joyce relied on Homer. He has invented a traditional world and he can justify such an invention only if he can demonstrate that his aim is not invention but creation. To see how well he has done this it is necessary to examine the second mistake made about worlds like Tolkien's.

Some people seem automatically to prefer any invented world to the one they find in, say, *Middlemarch*. They admire invention itself by calling it the imagination and praise Tolkien because he has invented so much. Their smugness is just as insufferable as the smugness of those who say they prefer real life. Tolkien has, it is true, invented names and whole languages with creatures to match, but while his names are almost always very good his languages and creatures often seem simply made up as a pastime. This is the trouble with the Shire and it is not the only place in *The Lord of the Rings* where an honest reader feels he is intruding on another man's private fantasies and games. But once the hobbits are on the road, and especially in the five chapters that encompass Moria and Lothlorien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* must be thought of not simply as invention, but as story. The central narrative of the trilogy is the quest of Frodo, but this would lapse quickly into moralizing were it not for Tolkien's ability to make clear the need for the quest and the importance of its consequences. This he can do only by expanding his vision beyond Frodo and the hobbits to try to bring all Middle Earth alive and thereby show all that would be lost if the quest failed. This, in turn, he does by a constant effort directed at bringing dead metaphor and cliche to life, so that hobbits and readers

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can be shocked into seeing what the presently dead or dying was when alive. The distinction between dead and live metaphor is difficult to enforce with quotation because the strength of any particular metaphor lies in the story it describes and sometimes it is only after whole pages of apparently flat, dead writing that we suddenly realize the words are bringing a world to life:

> At the hill's foot Frodo found Aragorn [Strider], standing still and *silent as a tree;* but in his hand was a small golden bloom of elanor, and *a light was in his eyes.* He *was wrapped* in some fair memory: and as Frodo looked at him he knew that he beheld things as they had once been in this same place. For the grim years *were removed* from the face of Aragorn, and he seemed clothed in white, a young lord tall and fair; and he spoke words in the Elvish tongue to one whom Frodo could not see. [Italics mine].

If the last sentence is to seem anything but whimsical, the italicized words must be seen as "literally" true. In Lothlorien the trees now are silent but once were not, so that "silent as a tree" does not mean simply "quiet" or "dumb" but something closer to "deliberately silent." The light of Lothlorien shines from a vanished world, thus, and the light which Aragorn once saw when all Lothlorien was alive shines now only as a memory. Yet it also wraps him because the light that once shone can never be totally extinguished: "In winters here no heart could mourn for summer or for spring." The sense of past illuminating present is clinched with a simple ambiguity: in "as Frodo looked at him he knew that he beheld things as they once had been," the second "he" can refer either to Frodo or Aragorn so that what light wraps Aragorn in memory also can be seen by Frodo in Aragorn's eyes. Here, as in Charles Williams, we are asked to grasp an idea behind an image, and "see" a symbolic place, but here image and idea are constantly working on each other to make the other clear, so that once the idea of Lothlorien is grasped we can return to the image to make it resonant rather than be forced to throw it away in order to avoid confusion. After two or three passages like this one the reader has a whole new meaning for the word *elven* and Aragorn does emerge clothed in white, a young lord and fair. The "action" of this scene, then, as in any good story, not only redefines the past but shows the way to the future. After this moment not only is Aragorn revealed as the king-to-be but Frodo has something more to defend than the Shire. Place, action, and character have become one.

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The invention, then, of *The Lord of the Rings* lies not in the number of places and names Tolkien can invent but in the life with which he can invest them. The only thing that can be said for the power to invent in itself is that is offers a way for the author to avoid mechanical allegory or reduction to iconography. When the meaning of a tale restricts it from doing more than Meaning, places, people, and ideas all are reduced to counters for a chess game the author plays with himself. Mechanized allegory often appears in the later work of good writers—*A Fable, The Old Man and the Sea, Lady Chatterley's Lover, The Rover*—and it haunts utopian fiction and science fiction where so often the writing becomes automatic once the gimmick is established. C. S. Lewis has said that the epic style practically writes itself, and perhaps he would have said the same for Tolkien's style. But he would have been wrong; when Tolkien (or Dickens or Ariosto) becomes slack, he invents a new place or character or inset story. This inventing is in itself boring and the writing there is usually bad because the dead metaphors have nothing to bring them to life. Such inventions do not ruin the work, however, and the way is still open for invention that is creative. But when Milton or Swift or Blake become slack they become mechanical, and normally when an allegory becomes mechanical, the work is lost. Tolkien's advantage is a negative one, then, but real. Early in *The Fellowship of the Ring* the hobbits come on a character named Tom Bombadil, and Tom says he is the oldest living creature in Middle Earth. But all Tolkien can think of for Tom to say is things like:

> Tom's in a hurry now. Evening will follow day.
> Tom's going home again water-lillies bringing.
> Hey come derry dol! can you hear me singing?

As a result, the unfriendly reader finds an easy stopping place in Tom Bombadil; forty pages of such dull stuff so early in a long work is hard to get over. But this almost total failure has no power to damage the story to come and only mars the whole work.

Furthermore, the central symbol of the ring is astonishingly free from mechanical moral simplification. One can imagine Tolkien dreaming up his material for years, practicing elvish runes, creating genealogies and songs for all, knowing these were still only private materials and food for antiquarians. He wrote a

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preliminary book to *The Lord of the Rings,* a book for children called *The Hobbit* about an adventure of Frodo's uncle Bilbo, in which he finds the ring and wrests it from the Gollum, Smeagol, a hobbit-sized, weasel-like creature who long owned the ring and is now its corrupted servant. *The Hobbit* is a good book, yet the air which hangs over the first part of *The Fellowship of the Ring* hangs over it even more strongly. But the idea of the One Ring fashioned by the Dark Lord to control all the rings of power gives Tolkien a story, an alternative to adventures and songs and lore. It is the only large moral idea in the whole trilogy and by itself it furnished Tolkien with only a simple romantic quest. But because of it Frodo becomes heroic, the ideal central figure for an age, both in Middle Earth and in our own world, that has little need for the old heroes. Boromir is like Roland, Aragorn is like Spenser's Artegall, but Frodo is of a later age in which heroes cannot heal or simply choose to die bravely.

After the fellowship is broken Frodo and Sam wander through the mountains and are overtaken by the Gollum. Sam wants to destroy him immediately, but Frodo, knowing the ring is weakening him just as it did Gollum, refuses. So they set off with Gollum as guide now, and, in the trilogy's finest moments, they trudge through the Dead Marshes where lights like candles flicker in stagnant pools:

> "Yes, yes," said Gollum. "All dead, all rotten. Elves and men and orcs. The Dead Marshes. There was a great battle long ago, so they told him when Smeagol was young, when I was young before the Precious [the One Ring] came. It was a great battle. Tall men with long swords, and terrible elves, and Orcses shrieking. They fought on the plain for days and months at the Black Gates. But the Marshes have grown since then, swallowing up the graves; always creeping, creeping."

Gollum weaves their way through the Marshes, then "a black shadow loosed from Mordor, a vast shape winged and ominous," one of the Nine Ringwraiths flies directly over them, "sweeping the fen-reek with its ghastly wings." Finally "Frodo and Sam got up, rubbing their eyes, like children wakened from an evil dream to find the familiar night still over the world," but when day comes, "Frodo looked round in horror":

> Dreadful as the Dead Marshes had been, and the arid moors of Nomen's Land, more loathsome far was the country that the crawl-

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> ing day now slowly unveiled to their shrinking eyes. Even to the Mere of Dead Faces some haggard phantom of green spring would come; but here neither spring nor summer would ever come again. Here nothing lived, not even the leprous growths that feed on rottenness. The gasping pools were choked with ash and crawling muds, sickly white and gray . . . High mounds of crushed and powered rock, great cones of earth fire-blasted and poison-stained, stood like an obscene graveyard in endless rows, slowly revealed in the reluctant light.

Such is the approach to Mordor and the legacy of the Lord of the Rings; it was a brilliant stroke to use the same verb, *crawling,* to describe both the day and the mud. This is no world for heroes, but the landscape of a journey made by one who knows no more of heroics than Bloom or Joseph K. Here all the older terms for the struggle of good and evil—courage, hope, despair—seem irrelevant:

> One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
> One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.

Frodo is never made servant of the Dark Lord and the ring is finally destroyed, but the ring has brought him to Mordor and does once and for all bind him to what he sees there. Tolkien does not enforce this irony but he does make clear that the struggle is not so much one of good against evil as of life against itself in its effort to stay alive. We never see good or evil but rather the effects of being alive and of giving in to death, and we never see this more clearly than in the journey of the two hobbits and the Gollum, who is leading them not to Mount Doom and Sauron but to a giant spider named Shelob who lives in the mountains guarding Mordor: "Already, years before, Gollum had beheld her, Smeagol who pried into all dark holes, and in past days he had bowed and worshipped her, and the darkness of her evil will walked through all the ways of his weariness beside him, cutting him off from light and from regret." But Frodo too is cut off from light and from regret in all the ways of *his* weariness, and though he escapes from Shelob and the ring falls into Mount Doom, Frodo is too overcome to destroy the ring himself or to be able to return in peace to the Shire when the war is over. Frodo's journey, especially in the second part of *The Two Towers,* is the triumph of *The Lord of the Rings.* Here, except for those places

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where Tolkien unwisely thinks he needs "relief," the writing is both vibrant and majestic, informing the myth and informed by it. Like so many other great passages in modern literature—the openings, say, of *Under Western Eyes, The Sound and the Fury,* and *The Rainbow*—it justifies a vision that in other places is simply large and expansive.

The mistakes to avoid with invented worlds can, I think, be avoided here only if one is willing to bear one's witness with it. *The Lord of the Rings* is a very literary work of a kind normally loved by the unliterary, and unquestionably many have given in to it and have become believers, convinced by iconography and charmed by Tolkien's saying he would have preferred to write in elvish. Among the early reviewers Michael Straight in *The New Republic* provides the best example of this failure. To Straight its high moral heroism rises above the normal ruck of fiction like a mountain above a marsh. He reveals his bias by citing *Ten North Frederick* as a good standard of comparison. Edmund Wilson, defending standards he imagined to be literary, replied in *The Nation*. He called it a genuine work for children, overlong and under-realized, all of which is perhaps true enough, but like Straight's claim of high moral heroism, beside the point. Wilson's insensitivity is most clearly revealed when he complains that the preternatural figures in Tolkien have no concrete presence the way they do in Swift and Poe. To take Tolkien's claims for the heroism of Frodo and Sam at face value is to give in to his wisdom and see no more in the journey than Gandalf and Aragorn see when they praise it. To say that *The Lord of the Rings* is too long and not fully realized is to say what can be said of any book ever written; to say it might be a good book for children is only to say, so far as I can see, that it contains heroes and elves. My own conviction is that the second half of each volume is not only markedly superior to the first half, but worthy to stand beside almost anything written in this century. Admirers will say that this is conceding too much and scoffers will say it is placing too high a value on the good parts. In any event, no one interested in disinterestedness can say it is only a matter of personal taste.

But even more important than the final value one gives to *The Lord of the Rings* is the fact that it should be compared with other writers of this century and not with Malory, Ariosto, or Spenser. Tolkien believes in the Old, but that fact one must live

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with as one does with the more solemn pronouncements of Faulkner or Lawrence; it can delineate some features of Tolkien's imagination but it cannot indicate its limits. Tolkien is incapable of irony and, in the usual sense, he lacks judgment. He sometimes tries to sound wise when he should not and he speaks in very silly ways of being only a translator of various books really written by Bilbo and Frodo Baggins. He is, after all, a part of Anglo-Oxford. But, like many writers who offer no pattern worthy of fashioning one's life after it, Tolkien does know what he is talking about, and what he is talking about is not a world he invented but one he inherited. To call him modern is to sound like jacket copy announcing that Tolkien has "disturbing implications for our own time" when in fact Tolkien is modern simply because he cannot avoid it. He may claim great things for Aragorn but such a hero cannot stir his imagination.

In a world bereft of usable traditions Tolkien defines a large tract of modern existence by creating a story strong enough to rattle traditional syntax and metaphors to life. It has always been easy to cast a fish eye over such works as *Four Quartets* or "Directive" or *Ulysses* and to announce that they are hoaxes. It is even sometimes necessary to do this in order to come to terms with great withdrawn writers. It is easy to mock *The Lord of the Rings* because it is kid's stuff just as surely as "Little Gidding" is the wedding of banal language and a creed outworn. But to insist exclusively on these points is to put a bullet through one's own head. If we are to avoid even the most obvious sentimentalities and nostalgic sighings we must take our authors where we find them. Anglo-Oxford often seems to resemble one of Tolkien's Dead Marshes, filled with flickering lights not quite gone out. To move through it unseduced either by it or its opposites is difficult, and the reward is not wholeness beyond confusion but only another instance of impossible greatness. But until we are clearer than we now are about the traditions and conventions of our literature at its best, all journeys will be tortuous. It would be hard to imagine a time when Tolkien will seem a traveller on the hard high road and perhaps it should be added that such a time would not be a good one in which to live. But it is not too soon to see that we will go before *The Lord of the Rings* goes, and for this we must be grateful.

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CAROLYN KIZER

Versions from Tu Fu

ADVISER TO THE COURT

East of the Palace Gates: Working Late

The watch cries, Daylight! shallow as the water-clock.
Spring banners are unfurled for the morning procession.

Officials march back and forth from the Emperor's Audience;
Coming away, we break ranks, to wander among the blossoms.

I turn back towards my office: willow fronds brush my face
As if to veil my yawns. Eyes blur in the late-morning haze.

The city walls are moist from snow that has melted
From the lookout towers. O the fresh odor of wet stone!

Clouds drift among the buildings. Contriving to be alone,
I burn the draft of another memorandum.

The next time I lift my head I see twilight outside:
Dawn and dusk identical. It must be time to go home.

As I amble along on my horse, I hear sleepy cluckings,
The rustle of hay. The chickens are settling down.

To A Brother Official

Cry of the fifth watch! Dawn hastens to obey
The water-clock. Officially, day has begun.
Peach blossoms, bibulous and blushing
From spring wine; on the banners
The embroidery dragons move uneasily
As if warmed into life by the new sun.

High above the Palace, swallows dip
In the light breeze. As you hurry from the Audience,

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The odor of incense lingers in your sleeves.
O my friend, each black stroke of your poem
Gleams like a new pearl, shines like polished jade!

Because we honor two talented generations,
Your father and you, we name your offices
West of the Palace Gate, the Phoenix Pond.

Working All Night in Springtime

When day begins to darken
Flowers along the wall
Merge into the shadows.
Skyward the birds chirp softly
Searching for a roost.

Ten thousand common households
Are illumined by the stars.
The firmament of Heaven
Is drenched in all the moonlight
Of this most brilliant night.

So quiet! I hear keys turning
In gold locks of the Palace doors.
The wind, a faint jingle, sounding
Like the Imperial horses
As they shake their pendants of jade.

I must present a memorial
To the Throne-room, in the morning.
Sleepless now, whether I work or not,
All night I measure the hours
Of all night, in my mind. . .

End of an Audience

Their sleeves like purple orchids
Two ladies of the court stand by the inner door
Of the Throne-room, ushering courtiers from the chamber.

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Incense whirls in the hallways: the Spring wind!
Sun sparks on the flowered robes of a thousand officials.

The water-clock in the tower shows the hour.
I stand close enough to the Prince to see his expression:
His Majesty looks brilliant with joy today!
When I leave the Palace, I go to collect my colleagues
To pay our respects to the Ministers of State.

Reply to a Friend's Advice

Leaving the Audience by the quiet corridors,
Stately and beautiful, we pass through the Palace gates,

Turning in different directions: you go to the West
With the Ministers of State. I, otherwise.

On my side, the willow-twigs are fragile, greening.
You are struck by scarlet flowers over there.

Our separate ways! You write so well, so kindly,
To caution, in vain, a garrulous old man.

On The Way Out

Last year I rejoined the Emperor by this road
When the barbarians swarmed over the Western suburbs.
I'm so far from having recovered from my fear
That shreds of my soul still dangle in the air.

Dangling and wandering, as I do now,
Close to the Throne, yet I am driven away
To a vast, distant province! Surely His Majesty
Could not have intended this. What, I, betrayed?

Ruin! As talent fails and I grow old.
My steadfastness in trying times has aged me.
I pull on my horse's reins, and pausing,
Gaze for a final time on the Palace walls.

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BANISHMENT

Too Much Heat, Too Much Work

It's the fourteenth of August, and I'm too hot
To endure food, or bed. Steam and the fear of scorpions,
Keep me awake. I'm told the heat won't fade with Autumn.

Swarms of flies arrive. I'm roped into my clothes.
In another moment I'll scream down the office
As the paper mountains rise higher on my desk.

Oh those real mountains to the south of here!
I gaze at the ravines kept cool by pines.
If I could walk on ice, with my feet bare!

Reunion

Joy in this meeting grieves our two white heads
Knowing they greet each other a final time.
We nod through the long night watches, still resenting
The speed with which the candle shrinks and pales.

I dread the hour the Milky Way dries up forever.
Let us fill our cups and drain them, over and over
While we can, before the world returns with dawn
When we blot our eyes and turn our backs on each other.

A VISIT IN WINTER

To The Temple of His Mystical Majesty

Pole star and northern capital: equal as sceptre and orb.
Fences march up the hill like troops protecting the city.
The officer-priests are severe, the guards grim and cautious.

The sky of early winter, celadon, not ice-blue,
Matches the roof-tiles which repel the cold.
Sound of a slap! War between tiles and weather.

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All things come together: In the yard the gilded tower
Celebrates oneness. Doors painted with mountains and rivers
Merge with the true landscape which supports them.

Artifice! To concoct realities, reorder the minute universe,
These roof-beams carved with infinite skill
So that the sun and moon revolve around this place.

The deathless plum tree has tenacious roots,
Strong as the scent of orchids, sturdy as dynasties.
The victim of history, our Emperor, master of virtue.

When we toll the names of great painters, begin with Wu
Who moved whole countrysides into this room,
Nourished to gleaming life in a hothouse for Heaven & Earth.

Five learnéd men, in procession like elephants,
Heavy, grey, never breaking their close-linked chain;
Like an orderly flight of geese, a thousand pale officials

Follow them: tame civil servants in dragon robes.
The tassels on their ceremonial head-gear
Toss like flames; wind whips the triangular banners.

Great cedars cast their shadows across the temple grounds
In dark diagonals. Pears, early gold, blush now from the frost.
Hidden by shadows, jade wind-bells move in the eaves:

Their music. The naked, frozen windlass on the well;
Like the silver Emperor of Han, immobilized
For a while. The spirit thaws as the old beliefs are revived.

But is the spirit of man hollow as the note of wind-bells,
Or as a great tree, ripe for felling? Indeed, if we are deathless,
Where then is randomness, Art's impulse, true disorder?

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GERALD BUTLER

Instructions From Scientific American

(Vol. 208, no. 6, p. 156)

Take two wires and twist them into helixes,
one to the left, the other to the right,
and entwine them partially. You have to solder
where each end touches the other wire. Now
pinch each end of the central overlap
and move your hands apart. Your fingers and thumbs
slide along the wire, making it rotate,
and helixes seem to be coming out each side
of the inexhaustible meshed portion like
the neutrino and antineutrino screwing out endlessly

from their source of creation, at the speed of light.
They were postulated because six to eight percent
of the sun's energy isn't accounted for, unless
it stays inside, but that would blow the sun up.
How does it get out? As massless, spinning energy
to which a million miles of sun is transparent.
As neutrinos. They let the sun shine out all
itself through itself. You can picture
the miracle of the endless helixes of wire
as what allows your hands to move away.

You have put down the wire toy. You ask me
what the darkness inside our star really is.
It must be what is transparent to my words,
your loneliness. Do I regard my own loneliness
differently? Hyperbole to galaxies and beyond
cannot cover it, describe it, dissolve it. Do you
wonder now if either of us is really ever lonely?
The darkness inside you must be like death.
See this miracle of words moving us apart!
Picture them as what allows us both to die.

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Flash

The reason why all colors look deeper
when you're taking a walk after a morning
of making long love is because
it is later than you thought it was.

The reason why all colors look darker
is the twilight in the long muscles
you walk with to go buy eggs. One thing
that's everywhere is the night coming on.

The Great Nebula in Orion
even viewed with an opera glass envelops
the tip of his sword with a spermy haze
and in the winter the constellation hangs

over the black bucks of lower Berkeley.
They creep out of their ghetto
into Cadillacs to contemplate each other's
headlights in the all night drive-in restaurant.

These neighbors of mine see I am good to people,
to women, and so do not mind that I,
a white man, have, for religious reasons
and low rent, encroached on their district.

If you make love all morning, you
eat breakfast in the afternoon: but if
you're out early, you can also deepen colors
with sunglasses, since they are holy objects.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

NOT THE LEAST AWFUL OF ALL POSSIBLE AWFUL PLAYS is the kind that indulges the solid burghers in the illusion of an artistic and intellectual experience, while, in fact, it hasn't the vaguest notion of what art is, and makes a mockery of the intellect. Such a play is Sidney Michaels's *Dylan,* which fails not only as a play and production, but also as a gossip column.

I remember once congratulating Dylan Thomas on his performance as the Raven in Louis MacNeice's radio play, *The Dark Tower.* "Whenever the B.B.C. needs any kind of bird," he replied, "they always come to me." Sidney Michaels has made Thomas into a combination promiscuous park pigeon, exhibitionist peacock, and scrapping gutter sparrow. That this blithe bird was also a spirit, a poet to be exact, you would never guess from the play. Oh, the word "poet" is flashed in your face often enough, and there are even two poems of Thomas's dragged in by their bristling hairs. Perhaps it is too much to ask of a commercial play to be literate and sensitive in its treatment of a poet's life, let alone to convey something of what it is like to be a poet. But must it shuttle between boozing and brawling, between lewd propositions and pinched posteriors, practically without respite? Just about the only glimpse of Thomas the poet is an ineptly contrived monologue in which he is made to analyze "Baa, baa, black sheep" in a mirthless parody of the New Criticism and turn it into the story of his life. Bah to that!

Since Mr. Michaels had not the talent—nor, very possibly, the intention—to give us a work of the imagination, he might at least have produced a piece of sharp journalism, a *chronique scandaleuse* with some psycho-sociological interest—which, I assume, was his intention. But even here he has failed. He has obviously not made a thorough study of the scattered source material, or he would have come up with far more outrageously funny anecdotes and more pungent epigrams than he has assembled. Thus the very first unpublished Thomas letter which Ralph Maud, that dedicated Thomist, stuck under my nose contained the following: "The women of the world, perpetually out of perspective, cry, Focus, Focus. Is it our fault that we misinterpret them?" There is a profusion of such gems wherever one looks, but Michaels was quite content to draw almost all his material from John Malcolm Brinnin's and Caitlin Thomas's well-known books, both of which tell more about their writers than about Dylan. Yet even out of these—especially with a little reading between the lines—something fairly provocative could have been constructed. But

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partly because of a shallow reading of the books, and partly because of an understandable fear of possible law-suits, such insights were not extracted. The result is an unrevealing revelation, an unshocking shocker, a clean dirty joke.

Nor does Alec Guinness, in the title part, fully succeed. I gather that he is trying to play Dylan against the grain, the coarse grain in which he is depicted. I understand also that Guinness is not particularly in sympathy with Thomas the man. But beyond all that, the interpretation is inapposite: an ithyphallic incubus is somehow reduced to an impotently impish leprechaun. Guinness's Dylan Thomas is really an aging Walter de la Mare with a pinch of Rupert Brooke for spice. The other actors are as drab as their stereotyped parts, except for Kate Reid as Caitlin, who does manage to wrest a second dimension from her one-dimensional role. As an example, however, of how to write a play with absolutely no point of view whatever, *Dylan* can scarcely be surpassed.

A far more imposing dramatic gossip column, and a considerably more massive example of how to *épater les bourgeois,* is Arthur Miller's *After the Fall.* Miller's mind has always loomed bulky on the stage—not like a genuine largeness, but like the elephantiasis of a flea. Imagine, to be precise, an enormous photographic enlargement of a microbe: instead of being majestic, it is merely distorted, grotesque, and blurred in its detail. This is emblematically manifest in the very opening stage direction of *After the Fall:* "The action takes place in the mind, thought, and memory of Quentin." Though *mind* would seem to cover the whole thing very nicely, one might, pedantically, wish to throw in *memory.* But what on earth is that pleonastic *thought* for? To satisfy Miller's need for magnifying grandiloquence: Damn the tautologies, full speed to the stars!

The most painful flaw of *After the Fall* is its megalomania combined with hypocrisy. A forthright, smiling self-love can be harmless and even likable. But here we have Miller telling us that he is relentlessly baring his, or his blatantly autobiographical hero's, chest—only to emerge as someone whose faults are as nothing compared to those of almost everybody else. True, Quentin is a bit cold to his women; true, when, as a lawyer, he undertakes to defend a man forsaken by all his other friends as he comes up for Congressional investigation, Quentin is scared about his own future and momentarily relieved when the man commits suicide. But at least Quentin reasons patiently with these women and freely admits his small failings; whereas they, unself-critical, hurl castrating abuse or violently absurd demands at him—in fact, we see four wives in the play calling their husbands "moron" or "idiot" and, at crucial points, maltreating them accordingly. And at least Quentin does stand up for the victim of McCarthyism when no one else will. In short, a classic case of what Wilde called washing one's clean linen in public.

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And the megalomania! What are we to make of a play whose chief purpose, or, at any rate, only lively element, is the laying of Marilyn Monroe's ghost, but which cannot do this without dragging in everything from McCarthy to Auschwitz, from the Communism of the Thirties to the Garden of Eden and a symbolic self-crucifixion? Quentin-Miller's humdrum peccadilloes are played out under the gaze of a Nazi death camp; a characteristic stage image shows us Quentin towering over three prostrate, spurned or adoring, women; and, in a particularly gross scene, "Maggie" Monroe's naked mating-dance is superimposed on a Congressional hearing. Similarly, in statements about his play, Miller is regularly invoking Goethe, Tolstoy, the Book of Genesis, or the attacks on Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (which he equates with unfavorable notices of his play), or informing us that it reveals "a hidden process which underlies the destructiveness hanging over this age," as though *After the Fall* had made some giant psychic discovery that hitherto eluded all analysis. Actually, the play's only discovery is a new form of contrition called *tua culpa*.

Perhaps the most preposterous statement of Miller's is this: "*After the Fall* is experimental in any terms. It involves what is not a new theatrical style so much as a new style of thinking about the world, the unification, the synthesis of individual psychology and social and moral considerations to make a moral biology on the stage. Instead of having a work concentrate on one element of man, I have tried to put him on in totality." This about a play which has for its sum total of newness a narrator who comments on or steps into remembered events —muddying their sequence and creating formlessness—and which has for its only solution to all the injustice, lovelessness, cruelty, loneliness, disaffection in this world an utterance made by the character representing Miller's new wife, to the effect that "one must finally take one's life in one's arms" and "kiss it" even though it has the "dreadful face" of an idiot child. *O altitudo*! The playwright is requested kindly to refrain from making a moral biology on the stage—or on the rug, either.

What Miller woefully lacks here is the imagination to digest, transpose, transubstantiate the givens of his life, never mind about kissing it. It is this incapacity for any translation beyond the changing of a few names and professions—including the awkward one of turning the theatre and writing of plays into the law and writing of briefs—that forces an audience to see the play, as it were, through a keyhole; that makes the viewer a voyeur, and the critical cogitator a gossip-monger in spite of himself. There would be nothing shocking about a sentence like "But how can you speak of love, she had been chewed and spat out by a long line of grinning men!" (except, perhaps, the triteness of the writing) if one's nose weren't being rubbed in the fact that this is Arthur Miller talking about Marilyn Monroe, his ex-wife. And so it goes, from intimate premarital disclosure to garish marital fracas

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and all the way to suicide, and we are every man his own Dorothy Kilgallen.

Space allows me only to itemize some of the other lapses. There is the inconsistency in character when Maggie hurtles from a paragon of healthy sexuality to a pathetic, abject, neurotic bitch. There is the incredibly poor taste of showing one's two previous wives as failures, while one's new one (with whom one hasn't had time to fall out as yet) is presented as a wartime heroine and peacetime angel of goodness, wisdom, and, above all, self-abnegation—the key to a woman's success with Mr. Miller. There are ghastly flights of pseudo-prose poetry (as in "How few the days are that hold the mind together like a tapestry hung on four or five hooks"); there is the autobiographical hero's grammar, so bad that it verges on illiteracy. There is the humorlessness, both in the few, feeble attempts at wit and in the ability to write, in complete seriousness, a line like, "And in the morning, a dagger in that dear little daughter's heart!" Add to this Elia Kazan's uninventive, musical comedy-style direction on a grandiose open stage on which you would expect to see, at the very least, *Prometheus Bound,* and performances which, with the exception of Barbara Loden's penetrant Maggie, are undistinguished, and you have a picture of what the mountain of Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre has labored to give birth to. Instead of toiling away at this overlong brief, Miller should have quietly settled out of court.

The second Lincoln Center bill was José Quintero's revival of *Marco Millions,* O'Neill's pennyworth of anti-materialist satire. This curious brew of fairy-tale sentimentality and collegiate jibes at our acquisitive society, seasoned with gnomic pseudo-Orientalisms like "Live—there is no other advice possible from one human being to another," or "Possess life like a lover, then sleep requited in the arms of death!" (the first piece of advice obviously becoming an invitation to repetitiveness) found us sleeping unrequited in our seats. The costumes of Beni Montresor were pretty in their chichi way, but they scarcely sufficed to cloak the histrionic exiguity of those who wore them.

A special note of warning must be sounded, however, concerning Zohra Lampert's Princess Kukachin. This was without doubt the worst performance in a season in which the competition for bottom honors was stiff. What does it mean when an actress reputed to have been very able once, arrives at this? ("Did she appear ill?—Yes, I could scarcely hear her voice." These lines were not, presumably, written in by O'Neill especially for Miss Lampert.) What has happened is that certain devices from the cabaret theatre have been wedded to Method platitudes and proliferate unchecked: idiot smiles, seizures of the eyebrow, sprouting of voluntary humps (shades of Oskar Matzerath!), turning one's hands into whisk brooms and one's voice inside out like a glove and then, by way of speaking, pulling

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it back in again. Such dehumanization requires active support from the actress, of course; but I wonder what external forces—audience love of the gimmick, homosexual directors' contempt for the womanly—abet such a pitiful transmogrification. Miss Lampert can count on little help from Lincoln Center, where the careful training program allows one actor, for example, to enunciate: "Impudent ignoramus! Does he imagine that the Church would *styoop* to such bickering?"

The third plague with which the Lord smote Lincoln Center was S. N. Behrman's *But for Whom Charlie*. Mr. Behrman is a lively old-timer, and if he had sat himself on the stage to reminisce and tell anecdotes, it might have been a cheery evening. Instead, he strung a few anecdotes and reminiscences together, trussed and dressed them up as people, allowed Elia Kazan to shuffle them sporadically around Jo Mielziner's dentist's waiting-room type of set, and if you read the polite reviews the next day, you might have concluded that what was dragging itself around that stage was a play. Actually, it was a lot of daringly up-to-date lines like, "I can't help feeling that if he had the courage and the virility, he'd be a pansy," and "There's no hope for the human race as long as Napoleon remains a glamor boy and St. Francis a shnookl [sic]." Also jokes about the statue of the Hermaphrodite, "Now there's a fellow who saves himself an awful lot of money!" and references to something called (so help me!) "post coitum melancholia" and someone pronounced Sham Four who is, apparently, Chamfort, but in this company you cannot spot the shams without their numbers.

The plot had something to do with foundations, and the good and bad people who run them; and also with the hard times of the children of a famous author whose legacy to them was a bitchy young stepmother. As a matter of fact, the truth about the foundations might make a perfectly good piece of theatre of the absurd, but Behrman's contraption had no foundation all the way down the line.

Some equally curious Latin is to be heard on the stage of the Brooks Atkinson Theatre, too, where "Non poss*oo*mus" is being uttered by Pope Pius XII as impersonated by Emlyn Williams in Herman Shumlin and Jerome Rothenberg's pig-Latin version of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*. The play, in the original and uncut German, is good and serious, often moving and occasionally brilliant, sometimes a bit creaky in the plotting and its free verse rather too loose-fitting; it is, in any case, the first worthy piece of religious drama written anywhere since the last war. But I have written elsewhere at some length about the play itself; let me confine myself here to the production.

Shumlin, as producer-director, and Rothenberg, as adapter, have turned *The Deputy* into a travesty. Whatever was literature, philosophy, theology in the original, whatever was ruthless indictment of false thinking and doing on the part of Catholics, Protestants, and even Jews, whatever was more than melodrama—in other words, al-

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most everything—was largely or completely cut. Brazenly inserted were bucketfuls of more melodrama and of Mr. Rothenberg's tasteless pseudo-poetry, which conscientious readers of little magazines may have encountered though scarcely remembered. I fervently hope that this version will be published: it will stand as the most shattering testimonial to the bankruptcy of Broadway and its degradation when it tries to come to grips with something literate. It should go down in history beside the Shakespeare adaptations of Nahum Tate and the eighteenth-century hacks; not that Hochhuth is anywhere near Shakespeare, but neither are Shumlin and Rothenberg anywhere near Tate.

Emlyn Williams does well enough by the non-Latin aspects of the Pope, but Jeremy Brett's young priest hero vacillates between *Beyond the Fringe* and *Ten Nights in a Bar Room.* No one else is worth mentioning. Shumlin's staging is schematic and ponderous, and Ter-Arutunian's sets are mostly pointlessly draped ropes with brass cylinders hanging from them for ballast, as if the production needed any more ballast. An opening-night picket carried a sign reading "Shumlin is the Antichrist," and as far as Hochhuth's play is concerned, that was perfectly true.

To do *Hamlet* in meaningful modern dress is, perhaps, permissible. But, as in the current revival, to do it as a dress rehearsal, with actors wearing the most outlandish and jarringly irrelevant rehearsal motley, is so disturbing as to require constant effort to ignore the frippery even fitfully. Indeed, during the first twenty minutes the air of *faux naïf* is so overpowering, that instead of bringing the highly sophisticated words closer to us, it turns us into dazed victims of dissociation of sensibility. Again, the set, which is not really a bare stage, but a set pretending to be a bare stage, with a gimmick or two built in, is a thoroughly disorienting phenomenon. There are more ambiguities in this production than were dreamt of in Mr. Empson's worst nightmares.

When I first saw Richard Burton in *The Lady's Not for Burning,* I was struck by the promise this young actor held out. But the promise is beginning to outlive the youth, and it would be most unnerving if he were to become a promising middle-aged actor. Burton's present Hamlet is handsome, virile, less intellectual than intuitive but possessed of supreme intuition, dazzlingly mobile in mind and body, and, whether boyish or brooding, making the stage reverberate with his moods. However, the passion of him is almost always spurious: the arms flailing too choreographically ("sawr the air," as he pronounces it), the eyes rolling in too fine and pale a frenzy, the voice trying to make up for everything with mere dynamics. There may be the rub: Burton's voice—as, to a certain extent, his expression—tends to become marooned in plangency, moored in near-surliness, which may form a striking contrast with the sudden flashes of merriment but

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makes lesser fits of passion disappear into their background and forces emotional climaxes to o'erleap themselves and fall flat. On the whole, the comic moments and those which require manly alacrity without intense feeling emerge full-fledged; others are apt to remain sketchy or grandly hollow. I was delighted by such bits as the "O, my prophetic soul!" projected almost laughingly with an amateur sleuth's pride at being proven right, and the reactions to the Ghost's subterraneous "Swear!" full of conspiratorial satisfaction only at the very last yielding to sad awareness. On the other hand, "How all occasions . . ." was delivered throughout in a drooping, tenebrose monotone, and the fight with Laertes in Ophelia's grave was utterly wan, possibly because too much energy had been spent in the Closet Scene in an exhibition of Greco-Roman wrestling with Gertrude.

Of the rest of the cast, the less said the better. Hume Cronyn remembers something of the way Tyrone Guthrie directed Polonius last summer in Minneapolis, and these scraps of memory are pleasant ornaments on an otherwise routine performance. Alfred Drake does Claudius in three different styles, all of them wrong. There is drawing-room comedy, musical comedy, and melodrama, and sometimes he switches in mid-sentence. "Alas, how should this bloody deed be answered?" is spoken in lavishly portentous fashion, and, presto, "Where is he gone?" with the prissy exasperation of a long-suffering television parent. Enough: the supporting performances were either terrible or unforgivable, and to distinguish between the two would be not only ungracious but also rather difficult.

John Gielgud has staged the Ghost interestingly as a waggling shadow on the wall (though it would have made more sense for those addressing it to face it rather than turn their backs on it) and he has taped a voice for that shadow that is perhaps a shade too richly creamy but at least suggests that speech in the hereafter is more mellifluent than in the here. That, however, is where Gielgud's good offices end; the rest of his staging is no better than his casting. When Claudius is upset by the play (I mean "The Mousetrap" just now, not *Hamlet*), he does not simply leave, but takes several steps toward Hamlet who takes several steps toward him: there they stand, glowering and practically rubbing noses. When Hamlet considers killing the praying King, he comes close enough to the royal nape to scratch it with his sword, or even with his nose, and delivers his lines full blast into the regal occiput. When, at the very end, Claudius stands fully unmasked, he literally stands: stage-center and mildly interested, and only gradually joining his unarmed retinue none of whom comes to his defense, until Hamlet slaughters him in his own good time. And in general two men seldom talk to each other in this *Hamlet* without thoroughly pawing each other or, at the very least, searching each other's faces for blackheads. Again, when Horatio hears "the cock that is the trumpet to the morn," the lights helpfully begin to come up. On "it

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faded on the crowing of the cock," the lights, to illustrate the fading, obligingly go down again. But on "the morn in russet mantle clad," cheerfully up go the lights again. Altogether a flickering affair, this *Hamlet;* and when Burton's candle goes out, we are left darkling.

The best that Broadway was able to offer lately is a trio of light comedies verging at one end on farce, and at the other on a trifle simplistically conceived satire. Thus *Barefoot in the Park* is a farce about the difficulties of a young newly-married couple whose problems stem about equally from the fact that their expectations from each other are too high not to produce letdowns, and that their small apartment, a sixth-floor walk-up, is too high not to produce exhaustion in those who make the climb. It is a variation on an old theme which we could call *omne post matrimonium animal triste,* and the situational comedy involving also a marriageable mother-in-law, an unorthodox neighbor, and various tradesmen, is full of jokes wheezing not so much from having to ascend six flights of stairs as from plain old age. But Neil Simon has managed to squeeze hidden bits of laughter out of the old jokes, just as one can always get a little more toothpaste out of an empty tube and feel more elation in getting it than in the luxurious first squeeze from a brand new tube. Mike Nichols has directed the play with a knowing verve which understands how to whip up bizarre truths out of the least likely ingredients, and some of the performances—especially that of Robert Redford, a young man with seemingly inexhaustible histrionic resources and a sense of economy to do a Keynes proud—add a mirror polish to the proceedings.

Nobody Loves an Albatross, by Ronald Alexander, is a satire on the Hollywood branch of American television, by far the heaviest and ungreenest branch of the tree. The hero is an aging boy-wonder of a producer, rumored to have literary talents as well, but actually only a master exploiter, master bluffer, and master heel. He is a Don Juan who flirts even more voluptuously with success than with women (not, however, letting women lie idle either), a Machiavel who has so systematically and palpably confused lies with bigger lies that the lesser ones begin to look like truths to other people, and sometimes even to himself. The play is funny and sharp, but it has serious limitations as satire: the victims are all, ultimately, less attractive and less intelligent than the hero-villain, so that his villainy becomes apocopated; there is a sentimental undercurrent throughout (the radiantly humane Negro maid, the fiercely clever but innocent little daughter); and, in the second half, the jokes thin out, weaken, and begin to repeat themselves. Nonetheless, Robert Preston endows the protagonist with his comic genius: he moves like a furibund hummingbird photographed in slow motion, his words slither on little panther's feet, and you can practically see—and certainly hear—the wheels going around in his head. There are good performances by most of the cast,

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and the peppery direction is by Gene Saks, another distinguished comic actor.

Somewhere in between these two plays is the locus of *Any Wednesday* by Muriel Resnik. This is a frivolous little comedy about a spoiled rich businessman, and the mistress, wife, and honest small businessman he tries to dangle on separate strings and keep subjugated or destroy—and of how the various marionettes, after their strings have accidentally got tangled up in one another, find strength, jointly, to pull down the puppeteer and assert their freedom and happiness. The play has the charm of goodnatured triviality that can staunchly resist pretentiousness, of sexual humor that seeks to amuse rather than shock, and of unreality that yet maintains a nodding acquaintance with human nature. It is full of negative virtues, but these, in a season of positive vices, can look rather good. Sandy Dennis makes the idiot-savant kept girl rather too studiedly cute, but the others, especially Gene Hackman as a provincial Lochinvar, play their parts as pleasantly as they were conceived. And Henry Kaplan's direction is—a rare thing these days—direct.

There are also three musical comedies to report on. *Hello, Dolly!* is an adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker,* itself a revision of an adaptation of an adaptation! Though the book, lyrics, and tunes are undistinguished, the sets, costumes, and performances are, for the most part, immensely likable. But what makes the show remarkable is the staging and choreography of Gower Champion. The basic unit is a kind of stylized movement which, with a little push, can spill over into dance; or, with a slight shove in the other direction, can become a mere heightened strut that accommodates itself to the burlesque character of the non-dancing scenes. No effort is made to justify logically the cropping up of dancers, or to make the dances more elaborate than mere high jinks; but for these and similar reasons a continuous onrushing flux is maintained, with dances tapering off into sheer grotesque locomotion which, in turn, grows in dynamism until it swells into dance. The irresistible force of Gower Champion's staging should establish *Hello, Dolly!* as an immovable object at the St. James Theatre.

High Spirits is a somewhat uneasy blending of Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* with musical-comedy elements superimposed on it. Even so, the play continues to be hilarious, some of the dances are appealingly inventive (and some are not), three or maybe even four songs are pleasing, and the performances are all charming, though one wishes Tammy Grimes wouldn't pronounce every other "s" as "sh" and jut her chin out quite so militantly—it does that adequately enough on its own. Bea Lillie as Mme. Arcati is in finest fettle: her contribution to *High Spirits* is high camp. And here, too, we detect the masterly hand of Gower Champion, who was called in to pep up the staging, and added some marvelous horseplay. Nice set and costume design by

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Robert Fletcher provides the show with suitable gift wrapping, and you know what they say about a gift horseplay.

As for *What Makes Sammy Run?*—for longer than a week, that is—I really don't know.

But all is not well abroad, either. The Théâtre de France of Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud came over from Paris, and people impressed with its ability to do everything from Racine (uninspiredly) to Offenbach (unnecessarily) gushed about "range" and "versatility." To me, frankly, it is all much the same whether a bunch of old warhorses get up on their hind legs and perform both a saraband and a polka, or just one, or neither. It is sad to see a company that triumphantly seceded from the Comédie Française end up undistinguishable from what it rebelled against. Gone are the days of experiment, of Ghelderode and Faulkner, of Prévert and Kafka, of poetry readings and pantomime.

In *Andromaque,* Maria Mauban was a dignified heroine and Jean Desailly a creditable though not credibly heroic Pyrrhus. Everybody else was feeble, the costumes horrid, and Barrault's Oreste pathetic, albeit not in the sense intended by Racine. In *La Vie Parisienne,* the clowning of Jean Parédès had gusto, but the others were merely trying hard, and the music and humor have come to look like something Huntington Hartford would hang up in his Gallery. *Le Mariage de Figaro* fared best, what with tired elegance coming naturally to the company, and the costumes of Yves Saint-Laurent performing beautifully. The *Salut à Molière* lay there like a wilted salad, but in Ionesco's *Le Piéton de l'air* everything came to life again—everything, that is, except the play, which is, for all its occasional *trouvailles* and fancy flying, less air-borne than still-born.

As I look back on this chronicle, I see that I should have taken over a famous opening of Ford Madox Ford's and begun by telling you that this is the saddest story ever told. Well, at least I can close with a quotation from Friedrich Hebbel dating from well over a century ago: "Whoever undertakes to say a serious word about the German theatre will appear to most people to be trying to perpetrate philosophical speculations on a baby's rattle, or, like Swift, to preach a sermon on a broomstick." You might try to draw what solace you can from that.

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IAN GREGOR

London Letter

"WHEN I PASS ALONG THE STRAND and come opposite to the Gaiety Theatre, I see a fugitive vision of delicate features under a shower of hair and a cloud of lace and hear the voice of Mdlle Sarah Bernhardt saying in its most caressing terms to the Londoners: 'The theatre is irresistible; *organise the theatre*!'" Eighty years later Matthew Arnold's "fugitive vision" became reality when last October the doors of the National Theatre were opened to the public for the first time. The site chosen was just across the river from the Strand, Sarah Bernhardt's delicate features have been replaced by the more austere ones of Sir Laurence Olivier, but Arnold's appeal for organisation has stayed, and at last, prevailed.

As early as 1848 the idea for a National Theatre in England had been mooted, and the first specific plans and recommendations were outlined in 1903 in a book published by Granville Barker and William Archer. Their scheme was elaborate, but the only fruit it bore was the formation, just before the first world war, of the Shakespeare Memorial Company, based on Stratford-upon-Avon. For over forty years, the plans gathered dust on shelves, and then in 1951, in an uprush of feeling about the dawn of a new Elizabethan age, a foundation stone was laid on a site facing the Strand on the south bank of the Thames. For several years, it seemed as if the stone marked the entrance to a vault, but with the appointment of Sir Laurence Olivier in 1958 as a trustee of the theatre, a gleam appeared on the horizon, and one evening last October the lights blazed on and the first production of the new National Theatre, *Hamlet,* was finally before the public.

It was twenty years ago when the state of the Broadway theatre caught the baleful eye of Tennessee Williams, and he wrote sharply "that the most exalted of the arts should have fallen into the receivership of businessmen and gamblers is a situation parallel in absurdity to the conduct of worship becoming the responsibilty of a herd of water buffaloes. It is one of those things that a man of reason had rather not think about until the means of redemption is more apparent." The means of redemption have been apparent in this country for some while; on the continent of Europe, they have not only been apparent, they have been taken. Royal enjoyment of the theatre in England, in one way or another, extends back as far as the sixteenth century; but it was an enjoyment which had little to do with its upkeep. In France, Louis XIV had taken Molière's actors into his treasury and the glories of the Comédie Française were the result. In Germany too, the city states had a long established tradition of sub-

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sidised theatre. Part of the British opposition, and a fairly sizable part, was due to the deep-rooted puritan hostility to the stage; when the door slammed on the theatres in 1642 reverberations went on being heard down the centuries. Great actors performed, distinguished audiences came, but interest was personal rather than national, and if there was concern even in high places, its attitude was that of "Don't let poor Nellie starve." By the end of the nineteenth century, respectability was creeping in. The Comédie Française had enjoyed successful seasons in London, Irving had established himself as a great actor, and in 1895 he was granted a knighthood. The first pebble was laid on the rocky road to a national theatre.

As an idea, state-subsidised art hardly makes the heart beat faster. Recently Mr Kingsley Amis expressed feelings not confined to himself when he remarked that he would rather rely on "the judgement of publishers who were profit-minded than submit his manuscripts to a panel of faceless do-gooders employed by the Ministry of Culture." It is possible to sympathise with an attitude like this, and yet be aware that if applied to the world of the theatre it would be disingenous in that it overlooks what is involved in the staging of a play. Pen, ink, paper—and talent, these are the requirements of a successful novelist; with the dramatist, is is merely the beginning of what he needs. If his play is to see the light of day, he must find a producer, actors, a theatre, stage crew, costumiers, electricians, and if it is to be successfully staged in London, which is still the mecca of the theatre, it must have financial success written all over it.

The implications of this are obvious enough. The backers of the theatre world are business men rather than apostles of national culture, and putting on a play is undertaking a considerable financial risk which, they feel understandably enough, must be approached with the same degree of caution as any other such risk. Consequently, the tendency is to play safe; avoid the elaborate and the experimental until it can be shown to have within it the ability to pay its way. It was the coming together of tendencies like this that made it possible to look at the London theatrical scene a few years ago and see that out of the two dozen or so plays that were running there, only three had been written before 1950. The past, always except the gilt-edged Shakespeare, is by and large unprofitable. A further consideration is that on the occasion when a great classic is revived and does meet with unusual success, it can only be kept in repertory for a limited period, and to revive a particular production becomes virtually impossible. No long-term offers of employment can be made to writers, directors or actors, and consequently every venture tends to be a fresh start. And this, of course, has its effect on everyone from the producer to the actor who appears in the back row of the crowd scenes.

In France matters are ordered differently. The Comédie Française receives an annual subsidy of £380,000 to keep in existence a company

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of 30 "sociétaires" (elected for a period of 20 years) and 50 "pensionnaires" (engaged for a season). At the present moment, the creation of the National Theatre has meant that a permanent company of 48 players has been gathered together, 4 directors, headed by Sir Laurence Olivier, and a literary manager, the former *Observer* and *New Yorker* dramatic critic, Kenneth Tynan, whose work it is to look after the library of the theatre, help in the selection of the plays, and act as P.R.O. with the public and the press. During the first year of its work the theatre has received a grant from the Treasury of £130,000, and it is this which has made the repertory of plays possible—6 in 6 months. Financially speaking, the individual plays have done well, some exceptionally so, and the average audience attendance has been nearly 90%, by far the highest in London. The future plans of the theatre are ambitious; an increasingly elaborate repertory system, so that one company will be able to travel while one plays at home, and so justify the word "national"; a dozen new plays during the next year, including work by Congreve, Strindberg, Brecht, Marston and three new plays by John Osborne, Peter Shafer, and a newcomer to the British stage, Charles Wood. It is an enormous undertaking and only subsidy can make it possible. At present, the company is housed in the Old Vic Theatre, but the site of the new theatre has been chosen, and the architect appointed. It is still a vexed question as to exactly what shape the theatre will take, and though the vexation is still confined to the drawing board, there has been general agreement on two points. The first, that there should be two auditoriums of varying size, and the second, which really underlies the decision to have two auditoriums, that a thousand people constitute a capacity audience, and after that, it is not possible to cope with the imperfections of visibility and audibility that occur. Beyond these general considerations little has, as yet, been agreed upon.

In addition to being able to keep in repertory a considerable number of plays and so make available a wider number of productions than ever before, a national theatre, like a national art gallery or a national academy of letters, ought to set a standard, by which other theatres can be judged. Freed from the concern of having to make quick financial returns, it can concentrate on establishing the quality of each individual play; it can, in short, because of its settled and corporate nature, achieve a style of its own. Style, of course, is something that emerges very sharply from the continental national theatres, but it has been created in different ways. Sometimes it has been the work of an individual director, possessed of extraordinary flair; this was true of Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Theatre, of Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble, and in Britain today, of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop in the east end of London. Style has more frequently been less individually interpreted, and the declared aim has been quite simply to present at the highest level the

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widest selection of plays from all places and periods. Theatres which have formulated this policy most notably have been the Schiller Theatre in West Berlin, the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, and now the National Theatre in London. The aim of these theatres is, in Mr Tynan's words, "To present each play in the style appropriate to it—and that is an ambition by no means as modest as it sounds."

A few weeks ago I went to London to see how these ideas and ambitions translated themselves into practice. What did the National Theatre look like not from the point of view of theatrical history, but from a seat in the stalls? Sometimes, the vision seemed rather too fugitive even, one might imagine, for Arnold's keen and sympathetic eye. That urbane figure might have been surprised if, like me, he had watched the opening act of George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* and overheard as the lights dimmed at the interval, a gentleman turn to his companion and remark, "Fun, isn't it?", to which the reply came, after a suitable pause for reflection, "Yes, they always do a well-dressed show here." The mind flitted happily to "The Windmill," *My Fair Lady* . . . but hardly to a play which centered on the Act of Impressment in 1706. Disturbing to the fine sensibility as the comment was, it pointed, on reflection, to a real deficiency in the play. If the play was not, in any normal use of the phrase, "well-dressed," it was in another sense "dressed up." The central situation in *The Recruiting Officer* is the dubious methods employed to obtain recruits for Marlborough's campaigns, particularly in the rural districts of England. It was a situation which stimulated Brecht's imagination and in *Drums and Trumpets* he made a version of the play and set it in the period of the American War of Independence.

A cool and sardonic play emerges, but it is very different from Farquhar's, and the difference is not to Farquhar's advantage. There is no particular virtue in indignation, but Farquhar's play seems to toy with it, and then rather arbitrarily and generally sets it aside while he pursues the amorous outlines of his sub-plot. And it is this plot which really established the mood of the evening. There we were very much in the world of conventional restoration comedy—the dashing seducer outwitted by his no less dashing heroine, the faithful lover passing through trial and tribulation, but at last, faithfully earning the marriage bed. The plot demands that the heroine shall spend much of her time disguised as a soldier, and however popular "breeches parts" were to an eighteenth-century audience, they effectively take the edge off any seriousness that the main plot might have. In a programme note the director, William Gaskill, explains why he did not wish to produce Brecht's version of the play, and his reasons sound plausible enough. But he seems uncertain just where to put the stress in Farquhar's play: "In directing a play which observes social values without criticising them, I have tried to make clear (without underlining) those points which will be more meaningful to a modern

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audience. To do more would be to destroy the framework in which Farquhar wrote and would involve rewriting the play." There is evident here a sense of unease, an uncertainty about the nature of fidelity to the original play. But for me, Mr Gaskill's uncertainty only laid bare the general weakness of the play and kept me resolutely looking at it, if not as "a well dressed show," then as "a costume piece."

How past is the past is a question which forbids an easy answer, but it is a pressing one for the producers of the National Theatre. In the usual run of English theatre, the theatrical "past" has largely been known as that area presided over by Shakespeare, and on occasion, such faithful deputies as Marlowe, Jonson, Webster, and a select few of the Restoration dramatists. More often than not, a trip to the past was buttressed by the explanation that it spoke to "the present." But with the resources of the National Theatre, such explanations are not as urgent as they once were. Isn't there some niche in the repertory of such a Theatre, for a showcase, a stylish exhibition of the plays that interested and entertained us yesterday? And if a precedent is to be found, then surely we have it in the figure of Feydeau, enshrined in the programme of the Comédie Française. The Director of the National Theatre appears to have concluded that there was room, and where the Comédie have sited Feydeau, London could site Harold Brighouse.

Brighouse, a Lancashire playwright of considerable skill, is remembered now almost exclusively for his comedy, *Hobson's Choice*, first produced in London during the Zeppelin Raids of 1916. The play, set in the outskirts of Manchester towards the end of the last century, is a *King Lear* in comic key. It is a battle of generations set in a boot and shoe shop, and what the patriarchal father demands from his three daughters is not love, but subservience, not less than total, to himself and to his business interests. Rebellion is forged in the will of his eldest daughter, on whom Hobson relies. She declares her intention of marrying his best craftsman, carries him off, and they set up in business on their own account. Hobson reads the writing on the wall, and is gradually forced to readmit his daughter and her husband into the business on terms of equal partnership. In short, it is a Saturday Night Fireside Comedy, and nothing that Sir Michael Redgrave and Miss Joan Plowright can do, can mask the fact. Three excellent acting parts, some salty dialogue, a scrupulous evocation of atmosphere—these are the merits of Harold Brighouse's play, and in the glare of the National Theatre showcase they look rather faded. I think there is certainly a case for this kind of exhibition play, but it must be a play with real vitality to it, even though the vitality is no longer of a kind we respond to. Producing *Hobson's Choice* wasn't really a genuine attempt to convey a theatrical experience, so much as a sophisticated recreation of an "all our yesterdays" mood. It was

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the evening with the family photograph album, and the rain beating on the windows outside.

The rain beats outside on the windows in *Uncle Vanya,* but no play could be further from the mood of *Hobson's Choice.* There is nothing "period" here, the past invades the present and holds us in its grip. The play has been the outstanding production of the season and has everything that the most austere platonist would demand in his Idea of a National Theatre. Directed and acted in by Laurence Olivier, the play deserves all the compliments that have been showered upon it, and it is a pleasing international irony that the unquestionable success of the first season of the British National Theatre should be the service it has performed to a Russian genius. But perhaps this is not quite the international gesture it seems. It is not infrequently said that we have made Chekov in our own image and likeness and certainly a few years ago when we had Chekov performed by the Moscow Arts Theatre, we had to glance at our programmes from time to time for reassurance that it was indeed Chekov we were seeing. The play we were watching was not the impressionistic, elegiac drama we had always assumed, it was not a drama of pauses, but a drama of vigorous action more acquainted with farce than tragedy. But if indeed we have made an English Chekov, then it is only fitting that it should be supremely in that tradition that the National Theatre should play him.

Set against a rather bleak wooden lodge, uncomfortably reminiscent of an army drill hall, everything was done to concentrate the maximum of attention on the actors. One of the dangers about this extremely deliberate, almost sculptured, playing of Chekov, is that it is always in danger of becoming farce—one more turn of the screw and it would be uproarious. The effect is similar to slowing down a film to a fraction below its proper speed. It was one of the great features of this production that its mastery of tempo was, at all times, complete. The effect of this mastery is seen in the gradual involvement of the audience. *Uncle Vanya* begins with the apparent disadvantage of having a set of characters so negative or idiosyncratic that it seems virtually impossible that they can ever engage a general tragic sympathy. There is Vanya who has spent his life fruitlessly running an estate for a brother-in-law, whom he had once considered a great literary genius, but whose empty pretensions he now recognises. Equally fruitlessly, he has fallen in love with the old pretender's second wife. In the house Vanya has come to be accepted wearily as a sad buffoon, the man who wouldn't grow up. At length the climax comes. The old man threatens to sell the estate and Vanya, stung at last to fury and indignation, seizes a gun, tries to shoot him, but only succeeds in failing dismally. It is hardly the stuff of which high drama is made. Yet this production managed to reveal behind the self-pitying idiosyncrasies of the particular individuals a general tragedy of loneliness.

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It is a loneliness as acutely physical as it is spiritual. "When shall we see you again?" Sonia asks the man she unavailingly loves. "Not before next summer, I expect. Hardly in the winter. . . ." The sentence trails away, and as we hear the rain falling against the shuttered windows we think of the immense distances between one house and another, one family and another. But, of course, the geographical distances are marginal to those which seem to separate the people themselves, as they offer each other vodka, bend over a map of the estate, and even embrace. The director of a Chekov play is always in danger of having it blown centrifugally apart, because the very substance of the drama is that the characters are all soloists who neither listen, nor want to listen, to what other people are saying. The only way in which the play can be held together is by the creation of a mood, in which we can be made to feel that these people, for all their psychic remoteness from each other, do, in fact, really live together, have these familial relationships, own this house, and that estate. This is a mood which must deepen as the play proceeds, so that it becomes inseparable from the action. And in Sonia's final speech to Vanya, we have a precise, inescapable register as to whether the production has been successful or not. It is one of those speeches which are banal in sentiment and cliché-ridden in phrase, and consequently can only succeed if it has the whole mounting weight of the play behind it. In the National Theatre's production, Sonia's speech was overwhelming, and the loneliness that so far had revealed the characters came out to engulf the audience and drew them in too. The past had indeed been made present and we felt in the company of a magisterial production.

Looking at the season as a whole, it would be surprising if the reach had not exceeded the grasp, but six months after the doors were first opened and with half a dozen plays behind them the National Theatre could legitimately claim to have made a decisive impact on the British theatre. And the cumulative impact would only have been possible with the co-operation of the Treasury. A classical production like *Uncle Vanya* can now go into permanent repertory, to be revived and rested at will; plays which have, for one reason or another, been less successful, can be rigorously removed without fear of stark financial loss. Because once a theatre like this establishes itself, its life becomes less and less dependent on the success or failure of individual plays; it begins to acquire a corporate dramatic life of its own. During the coming year extensive arrangements have been made to take the theatre into the main towns of England and Scotland, not simply as a travelling exhibition of finely produced plays, but as a way of encouraging the growth of drama in these towns, so that the time may come when the national theatre begins to be accepted as part of national life as necessary as public parks, civic libraries and museums.

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JACK RICHARDSON

Strangelove and *The Silence*

1

CERTAIN WORKS OF ART emanate from the general consciousness of their times. Like dinner-table manners or styles of dress, they seem not so much the result of a private, unique sensibility as of a collective effort. They embody, simply, attitudes that lie just beneath the surface of accepted belief and popular opinion, and the stir they cause on appearing is one of satisfaction rather than astonishment. It is certainly pleasant to see views held by a large, intelligent minority—and this is the only general consciousness that matters—presented suddenly in all the forbidding armaments of form and stylistic logic. There is a solid body of literature that comes under this heading, from Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* on one end, to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the other. The operation needed to peel back the epidermis of the proper sense of society and expose the layer immediately beneath it, demands a good amount of legerdemain; but the real skill is in knowing exactly when it should be performed. Moreover, the surgery should by no means be painless, and success is never counted in terms of the patient's recovery.

Dr. Strangelove/ or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, seems to me to be this kind of work. For years now, not only the premise but the style of this film has been lying but a single fathom beneath open, public display. In cabaret antics, comic novels, Beat poems, faculty-room repartee, the present moment in history and the standard responses to it, from Presidential action to Peace Marchers, have been shredded by wit. The bomb, and those who seriously consider it a tactical principle, seemed so far beyond rational discourse that they forced thought into a corner where its only remaining dignity was to dress the clown, make faces, and show its back to participants on both sides of the solemn debate over the advisability of universal suicide. Until now, however, such civilized behavior has been closeted in semi-private arenas, where anarchy performed over and over again to the same audience. But then, the consciousness began to swell, until at last it has spilled over into mass media, and, of all unlikely places, into an American film. It is no wonder that there was critical rejoicing among some very astute people. It was almost a legislative victory. A film that would be seen by millions, a film on the right side of things that did not suffer from Hollywood portentousness or the piety of a *Saturday Review* editorial. The hipster could swing with it; the intellectual could see the military

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mind lampooned to a point where further debate with it would be demeaning; the movie critic, used to the studied evasiveness of American films, finally found one that followed unsparingly from its premise. And so *Dr. Strangelove* received as much praise from as many different quarters as is decent for a work of art purporting to be unsettling.

With all these honors on, *Dr. Strangelove* still seems to me, after seeing it a third time, to have fallen short of the mark it set for itself. It may very well be the best American movie made in years and a bold statement in the context of the "general viewing public," but this is only praise-by-paradox and could apply equally to films many times inferior to it. There are fine things in *Dr. Strangelove,* and praise for them need not be qualified; but there are also flaws which fatally injure a fair notion.

First, there is the question of humor. The film is a satire, a dark satire, and the degree to which such a style succeeds in becoming more than mere caterwauling is in direct proportion to the amount, quality, and freshness of wit in it. Now, occasionally, in *Dr. Strangelove,* there are amusing, truly amusing moments. The opening sequence, in which two bombers copulate in mid-air by means of a refuelling tube while the song "Try a Little Tenderness" plays, is a brilliant, quick statement of the film's manner and intention. The conception of General Jack D. Ripper, a paranoid Air Force General obsessed with his belief in Communist conspiracy against American "bodily fluids," proves the most rounded characterization in the film. This is because Ripper not only embodies a Birch-like attitude towards nuclear war, but has arrived at this notion from a very personal and amusing origin. His scene with R.A.F. Officer Mandrake, in which he recounts his first sensing the importance of "bodily fluids" and the danger threatening them, and, by extension, equates post-coital depression with a Russian plot, is the best and deepest satire in the film because time was taken to imagine the reasons for certain military behavior, reasons which prove much funnier than the behavior itself. Finally, there is the role of Dr. Strangelove. His peroration in the film, in which he envisions an underground world, fights a possessed right arm intent on offering Nazi salutes against its owner's will, refers to the American President as *Mein Führer,* and in exaltation rises from his wheel chair, able, at the world's end, to walk again, creates the sort of humorous abandon that is strained for but not quite reached in other moments.

Often, however, one feels that those responsible for the film have settled for rather worn gags and bits of political sniping that have become just too fashionable and easily accepted to have a place alongside the work's better moments. Often, too, there is simple indulgence: lines, born neither out of situation nor character, bustle the audience into laughter that is much different from the type occasioned by General Ripper's melancholy explanations of patriotism;

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burlesque bits of business pop up as if to remind us that what we are seeing is meant to be amusing; and now and then an apposite comic sketch, such as General "Buck" Turgidson's distrust of Commies, is dragged around the block once too often. And finally, there are simply moments of egregious writing. A group of men haggling over morality and strategy in a "War Room" is gloomily comic enough without an American General and Russian Ambassador wrestling with each other and then being admonished by the President that their behavior violates the room's dignity—("Gentlemen! Such behavior in the War Room!").

The director, Stanley Kubrick, manages individual scenes beautifully. He is attentive to all those techniques intrinsic to film. The heightening of a speech and performance by the choice of a dramatic camera angle; the use of light and shadow in the "War Room" so that it seems an endless subterranean world where footfalls echo ominously; the maintenance, in true American film-making tradition, of a sense of narrative action through the plane that deposits the bomb triggering world destruction;—all this buttresses his comedy with good old melodramatic interest. Piece by piece, one applauds his work. It is when *Strangelove* comes to an end that one feels that there has been a certain lack of control, an omission of any form that rounds the piece out and gives to it that tightness, purpose, and freedom from the extraneous and unpointed that satire must have to keep from being a little flabby and labored.

As a director of actors, Mr. Kubrick is less able. I had the feeling that each of his performers were allowed to do their bits and were left unedited in any way. George C. Scott begins superbly, keeping a good balance between the character he is playing and the comic actor's comment on that character. By the film's end, however, he is all comment: gesticulations, grimaces, pratfalls—everything but winks at the audience. Peter Sellers plays three roles, including the American President and the title part, and performs with all his usual showmanship. But the fact that we know that it is Peter Sellers engaged in another of his *tours de force,* appearing now here with one accent, now there in another disguise, disconcerts because it is again an example of superfluous signposts to humor. As much as one admires his dexterity, one wonders what purpose this triple-play serves in the film.

All the above imputes to the film a lack of coherence and artistry. Harmful, but not deadly, weaknesses. But *Dr. Strangelove* has a defect worse than these; namely, that it is not, to the times to which it wishes to speak, fresh in point of view or deep in insight. Perhaps that general consciousness that created *Strangelove* has become a little stodgy, a little smug in its years of rebellion. Perhaps universal destruction has turned into a tired comic device, like banana peels and baggy pants. Perhaps the old paradoxes are not enough and the film

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should have cut deeper and gone beyond the often punctured targets of semi-illiterate militarists, effete liberals, and Neanderthal soldiers. It should have indicted, tweaked, and made comic havoc of us all. No one should have been allowed to feel superior to it. If this is a hard standard, then I can only plead that *Dr. Strangelove* merits it. If it had not so often taken the easy and obvious way, then it indeed might have justly earned comparison with some of the great satires of the past. But as it is, one feels a real try wasn't made, and one is tempted to conclude about *Dr. Strangelove* as Johnson did (wrongly) about a work of Swift's, that: "He had to count ten, and he has counted it right."

2

By now, for me, going to see a Bergman film is almost a semi-annual event. In the ten years since I first saw the work of the Swedish genius—*Naked Night,* in a 42nd Street movie house—and gave up, in that fetid darkness, the advertised prurient experience for the overwhelming shock of art, I have been his votary. This has not always been easy. Like most products of an analytic, Anglo-Saxon culture I become edgy and reticent when confronted with the anfractuous fare of Nordic somberness and metaphysical anguish. I am cautious about the symbolic parable, suspecting it to be a strategic retreat from the demands of clarity that gains for the author an undeserved reputation for profundity. Like all true critical Baconians, I want to see particulars from a recognizable world gathered, examined, and understood before we try for lurid universals. And finally, to round out this prim personality, I am not at all certain that a well-bred work should contain speculations on the nature of God and man's relation, or absence of it, to Him. Such musings, after all, occupy a cultivated individual on his daily round but a fraction of the time, if he has not indeed filed them away altogether as excesses from a muddled youth.

In *The Silence,* Ingmar Bergman gives evidence, if any more were needed, that he is an artist unaware of his vulnerability to Anglo-American criticism when he wishes, creatively, to define all existence in a single work. He just will not be content to describe, narrate, and form muted conclusions about the personal lives of his characters. He is not concerned with the small, well-perceived insight, though beautifully capable of it, unless it can be matched, added, and linked to what he considers an inclusive statement about the fate of man on this planet at this time. The film begins in the compartment of a train travelling through a country completely foreign to the audience and to the compartment's three occupants—a young boy, his mother, his aunt. The oldest sister, played by Ingrid Thulin, is taken ill, forcing an unplanned stopover in an almost empty rococo hotel in the alien land's capital. Once inside the suite, Bergman begins making

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distinctions between the two sisters. While one takes to her bed, infirm, glasses propped on her brow, and with alternate lethargy and furibundity works on translations, the other, the boy's mother—a full, rounded, luxuriously breasted woman—plays with her son, undresses to bathe before him, and lies, in pagan naturalness, next to him while they nap through part of an afternoon. There is a restive quietness in the room that is broken finally by the sound of low-flying planes. The boy wakens, dresses, places a toy pistol in his belt and leaves to explore the hotel corridor outside his room.

Against this scene of sleep and drowsy affection between mother and son, Bergman juxtaposes the solitary actions of Miss Thulin. In what must surely be the most thorough investigation of the sounds and movements of solitude ever put on film, he shows her working, crushing cigarettes into a glutted ash-tray, drinking, wandering about the room and in to observe the tranquility of the two sleeping figures; then to the window to open it, stare down at a crowded street, wince distastefully at the noise flushing into her silence; now back to her bottle, and, finding it empty, the ring for a waiter who immediately appears but who can speak not a word of any language she knows; they babble together amiably; he leaves, returns with a bottle, and departs again; more desperate now, the oppressiveness of the self growing heavier without distractions, she drinks, falls back upon the bed and, in the close-up of a self-inflicted orgasm, the study ends.

I have detailed all this not only because it is the film's pivotal scene concerning this woman, but because it points up how Bergman does in fact, by a gathering of human particulars, by a specificity of human behavior, give us the necessary condition of flesh from which the right is then earned to insinuate symbolism.

The contrast with the younger sister grows deeper as we watch her, after rising, wander with sharp, sullen anxiousness through the streets in front of the hotel. Gunnel Lindblom, whose performance matches Miss Thulin's in its febrile control, unfolds to us bit by bit the terror of drifting into the wash of incomprehensible sensuality. Her encounter with a busboy, her revulsion as she watches a couple make love in the balcony of a vaudeville house, her damp face defiantly forming the features that beckon a rendezvous with the unshaven waiter—with these, and the artistry of Bergman's camera, a woman is created as palpable as any in literature.

But *a* woman is not completely correct. These sisters, linked by blood and a past lesbian love, are not, finally, meant to be considered separate beings. When, through the rest of the film, we discover that the one who is ill has clung to a spirituality enfeebled by disgust of the brute physicality of life and supported by what she terms logic, while the other, once intimidated by this, now feels betrayed by its weakness and wishes to unfetter herself from this awareness of mind and the pricks not so much of conscience as of con-

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sciousness—when this is told us we know that it is one human being we have been watching. It is a human being caught in the dilemma that has occupied the best European art for the last hundred years; namely, that the spirit, the mind, and all they aspired to by way of order and peace, have been irreparably crippled by the knowledge that there is in life no principle but an unyielding, sightless rhythm of sensuality. Schopenhauer, as faulty as his metaphysics were, stated this opposition so forcefully in his *World As Will and Idea,* that most great artists have felt it necessary, by way of justifying their very acts of creation, to deal with it. From Thomas Mann's dichotomy of art and life to Sartre's nausea and undeduced commitment, a reconciliation with this knowledge has been attempted over and over again. For as much as one would like to surrender to the uncharted, brutal movements of simple existence, the maimed vestiges of a mind that once structured a universe and every life in it still hold on. We cannot, as Rilke said, have the openness of lower creatures, moving senselessly like water, free from the awareness of death. And Bergman, when he takes us into a half-lit room, where the younger sister furiously makes love to a stranger who cannot even lie to her since there is no language common to them, he shows us starkly why Rilke was right; for, weak, sick, piously whining, the older sister arrives to dispel the ether and pretend to an understanding that is impossible in this world but yet cannot be abandoned by either of them.

And the son, who has strolled through empty corridors, dallied with aberrance in the form of a troupe of dwarfs, discovered death from the photographs of the ancient waiter, and seen his mother, after preliminary love-making in the hall, slip into a room with her lover—what of him? With his mother, he leaves his aunt alone and dying in the strange city. He carries with him a present from her—a list of foreign words, the meaning of which she has learned. He stares at his mother, whose body will never again be natural to him, and we know that he has seen too much ever again to be innocent of the terror of living. His legacy, a few words from a language he will never understand; his future, illiteracy of the soul.

One could also mention the abundance of technical brillance in this film, but this is accorded Bergman even by his detractors. What I would, unreservedly, state is that he has created, in full awareness, what Thomas Mann has called "Art on the verge of its own impossibility."

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music Chronicle

MENOTTI'S OPERAS HAVE PROVIDED SOME OF THE OCCASIONS to point out that what is of primary importance in an opera is not the play which is set to music but the music to which the play is set. For in his operas it has been the play that has engaged and held interest primarily, and for some in the audience so strongly as to mislead them into thinking the dramatic force was in the trashy music carrying the dialogue and action; though for others with a taste for the trashy—e.g. for Puccini—the music has added its own attractiveness to the interest of the play. The most recent such occasion was provided at the Metropolitan the past season by *The Last Savage,* which was unusual only in the feebleness of both the play and the music that delighted the audience at the performance I attended, and that Winthrop Sargeant recommended heartily to *New Yorker* readers as something to see and hear. Indeed, I would say that one heard in the music the operation of the mind of the fool who wrote the libretto—the pretentious fool who would a satirist be, and in whose satire about a jungle savage's rejection of our civilization the savage actually was a native of India acting the part for pay, and the civilization he rejected was embodied in the familiar caricature of the big cocktail party of and for the intellectually and artistically fraudulent. In the detail too, what was offered—and enjoyed by the audience and Mr. Sargeant—as strokes of penetrating observation and humor struck me as embarrassing and painful; and whereas Mr. Sargeant heard rich evidence of the subtlety and sheer virtuosity of Menotti's musical workmanship, I was struck by his loss of the fluency he used to exhibit in his trashy invention, and the discrepancy at point after point between the evident attempt and the feeble achievement even in his own terms. The only pleasure of the occasion was Beni Montresor's extraordinarily beautiful sets for the room and the court of the Indian palace; but one regretted the waste of his talent, as well as the talents of the other participants and the many thousands of dollars the production cost, on a work that so clearly did not merit the expenditure. And one was depressed by the level of taste revealed by the Metropolitan's management in producing it and the public in enjoying it.

It says something about Mr. Bing's taste that he should have taken until 1964 to produce Verdi's *Falstaff,* presumably considering this masterpiece—which should never be out of the repertory of a company like the Metropolitan—less urgent than such matters as *Andréa Chénier, Turandot, Martha,* Barber's *Vanessa,* and the Offenbach and Johann Strauss operettas that should never be *in* the repertory of the

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Metropolitan (any more than should the works of Jerome Kern and Cole Porter). Mr. Bing may well have thought he was serving Verdi as well as his publicity department by getting Leonard Bernstein to conduct the work; and in fact Bernstein is a conductor with impressive gifts; but unfortunately one can't have the gifts without Bernstein himself and the personal characteristics that affect his use of the gifts. The gifted musician paced and shaped much of *Falstaff* effectively; but the overstimulated extrovert began the work with a whipping up of the tempo that made the opening scene frenetic; and with such occasional bursts of excessive speed there was also occasional excessive slowing down and lingering. As it happened, moreover, with the exaggerated speed of the opening scene there was the exaggerated buffoonery of Bardolfo and Pistola—which is to say that the work of Franco Zeffirelli, the director as well as the designer of the production, also exhibited occasional excesses. Though there was nothing for the eye as astounding and unforgettable as the first scene of his Old Vic *Romeo and Juliet,* the sets for *Falstaff* were good and the costumes handsome, and the stage action included such felicitous inventions as the added silent characters in the inn scenes who created an enlivened context for the doings of the principals, or Ford's prolonged teasing of Falstaff with the purse of money in their interview. But it included the exaggerated buffooneries I have mentioned, the exaggerated boyish rushing and stumbling about of Fenton, and a certain amount of hubbub that represented the mistaken idea that something must be going on at every moment. The italicizing by conductor and director was damaging to the delicate-textured work; and damaging also right from the opening scene were the sounds which Corena, the Falstaff in the performance I attended, produced in his struggle with a part he lacked the voice to sing. Ford was sung well by Sereni, and Fenton by Alva (though his fine tenor voice of a few years ago has lost some of its beauty); but it was the women—Tucci as Mrs. Ford, Raskin as Nanetta, Resnik as Mrs. Quickly, Elias as Mrs. Page—who contributed the best singing of the performance.

I was reminded of the Metropolitan's productions of foreign operettas by the Jean-Louis Barrault company's performance of Offenbach's *La Vie Parisienne.* When this company was here the first time it gave a performance of *Hamlet* which struck me as the most impressive I had ever seen; and it seemed to me that its effectiveness came from a French style of stage speech and gesture which—like French conversational style—was much more rhetorically expansive and intensified than the English and American. In the performance of *La Vie Parisienne* one got this rhetorical heightening in the special style of a particular French theatrical genre using characters, situations and ways of thinking, behaving and joking from the French life of its period; and one got it done by actors completely familiar with the genre, the life it satirizes, and its style of performance. Or rather, one

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got this to start with, and in addition the work of the extraordinarily gifted actors of the Barrault company—including such superb comics in their different ways as Pierre Bertin and Jean Parédès—in a brilliantly contrived piece of theater craft. It should have taught Mr. Bing, who sat a few seats away from me, that the operettas of Offenbach and Johann Strauss exercise their charm only when performed in their original languages by companies at home in their styles, and lose all savor when given in English adaptations with people like Patrice Munsel and Theodor Uppman.

In Winthrop Sargeant's *New Yorker* reviews the works of Menotti, Carlisle Floyd and Douglas Moore have produced a dawn of American opera; in the columns of the New York *Herald Tribune,* where Alan Rich has succeeded Paul Henry Lang as music critic, "the banners of American opera were carried forward a considerable distance" by Hugo Weisgall's *Athaliah,* commissioned and performed this season by the Concert Opera Association. It is a work in the twelve-tone idiom which, according to Mr. Rich, causes one to "forget technique" and "hear a thoroughly modern opera in the great operatic tradition"—an opera, that is, in which "one senses the hand of an immensely gifted master of musical drama," whose "effects grow simply and logically out of intense dramatic tensions," who uses the twelve-tone technique in "strong, beautiful[ly?] shaped vocal phrases," and who thus "has set to rest—once and for all, I sincerely pray—the canard that atonality is incompatible with beauty." A notable and impressive achievement in Mr. Rich's prose, but not in Philharmonic Hall, where I heard only ugly sounds with no expressive relation to the text and not even mutually coherent relations in themselves.

A day later the American Opera Society gave New York its first hearing since 1895 of Rossini's *Semiramide.* And listening with expectations born of the beautiful writing Rossini showed himself to be capable of in *William Tell,* I was disappointed by vocal writing in *Semiramide* which struck my ear, this first time, as a mere competent exercise in the conventional style of the period, with an orchestral accompaniment that merely strummed along uninterestingly except for the one or two instances of a dramatically enlivening use of a powerful figure. But the vocal style was one that utilized the extraordinary capacities of the singers of the period; and the high-ranging florid writing in *Semiramide* provided the occasion for some of the most remarkable singing I have ever heard—not only by Joan Sutherland, whose breathtakingly accurate florid passages and fully rounded and secure high notes were produced in superbly shaped and styled phrases, but, unexpectedly, by Marilyn Horne, who exhibited a similar accurate agility and a similar impressive phrasing in her use of a voice far more beautiful than Sutherland's throughout the range from its rich dark contralto low notes to its bright and lovely soprano high notes. Impressive too was the musical and dramatically

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forceful use of an agreeable bass voice by Richard Cross. But the conducting of Richard Bonynge—though it held singers and orchestra together efficiently—didn't produce this time the orchestral context at once sensitive and spirited that it had produced on earlier occasions.

Quite as remarkable singing, in its different way, had been done a couple of days before by Teresa Berganza at her Carnegie Hall recital. The difference was the delicacy and subtlety of her style in the effortlessly accurate delivery of the florid passages of *"Nacqui all' affano"* from Rossini's *La Cenerentola*—delicacy and subtlety which made her phrasing of the opening melodic section of the aria enchanting. And they operated as impressively in the songs of Schubert, Wolf and Brahms, producing details like the *"Mein Herz!"* in Schubert's *Die Post,* the *"Ach, nein"* in Wolf's *In dem Schatten meiner Locken,* that conveyed new and wonderfully effective insights.

Watching George Solti conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra in Beethoven's *Leonore No. 3* and *Pastoral* Symphony at one of the concerts in the orchestra's special Carnegie Hall series, I discovered that he was another conductor with a curious baton technique that made one wonder how the orchestra managed to play with the ensemble precision one heard. More important, Solti didn't create a coherently sustained flow in any of the movements of the symphony; and its finale was disfigured by false horn notes that were without precedent in the playing of this orchestra. But in Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* Solti's beat clearly indicated his every wish in an impressively efficient operation with the orchestra that produced a superb realization of the score—one that, heard after an interval of several years, brought home to me with new impact the amazing originality and undiminished communicative power of this work in which Winthrop Sargeant hears only a dated conversation piece.

The Carnegie Hall festival of visiting orchestras gave me my first hearing of the Vienna Symphony since 1929, when it was a mediocre group, though capable of responding to the authority and powers of a conductor like Richard Strauss with astonishingly fine playing in a Mozart symphony. And this time I heard first-rate strings, good brass, but less good woodwinds, performing with excellent discipline and tone under the competent direction of Wolfgang Sawallisch, but not achieving the wonders I had read about in some press reports. I was hearing Sawallisch's work for the first time; and except for an excessive whipping up of speed in the last crescendo of Strauss's *Don Juan,* and a pace that seemed to me too fast for the proper effect of the opening movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto K.482, the operation—in a program that included also Strauss's seldom-played tone poem *Macbeth* and Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*—was musically satisfying, though again nothing to justify the extravagances of the reviews. I hadn't heard *Macbeth* since Strauss himself performed it with the Philadelphia

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Orchestra in 1921; and I was surprised anew by the inferiority in imaginative musical invention and in structure of this piece that Strauss composed after *Don Juan* and before *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Quixote,* his best works. Why a concert presenting a Viennese orchestra should have a French pianist—and one as inadequate as Philippe Entremont's playing in the Mozart concerto showed him to be—was a mystery, which produced an enjoyably characteristic observation by one of the many Austrians at the concert: "He doesn't understand anything, of course—I believe he is French—in any case he isn't *Austrian.*"

The Carnegie Hall festival also gave me my first experience with the Polish conductor Skrowaczewski, who in the opening work, Mozart's *Prague* Symphony, exhibited a far more busy and energetic and flamboyant conducting technique than was required to direct the Philadelphia Orchestra or to perform this music properly. In fact, after playing the powerful opening chords in accordance with his jerky staccato upbeats, the orchestra proceeded to give a traditional performance of the symphony quite different from the one delineated by Skrowaczewski's excited conducting. Then in the suite from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* (which, my guest remarked correctly, "sounds as though Prokofiev could turn it out by the yard, like wall-to-wall music") it appeared that Skrowaczewski had applied to Mozart an unsuitable conducting technique that was exactly right and worked fine with the coarse-grained, grandiloquent writing of the Prokofiev piece. And having demonstrated this once, Skrowaczewski demonstrated it a second time, with a heavily underscoring and coarsening performance of Schumann's Fourth (cheered at the end by the audience), followed by a high-powered and brilliantly executed performance—including a sentimentalizing of the oboe solo introducing the Dance of the Princesses that would have outraged Stravinsky—of the suite from *The Firebird* (louder cheers).

And the festival's concluding concerts presented the Chicago Symphony with its new conductor Jean Martinon. I knew the orchestra from recorded performances with Reiner, which testified to the technical powers that had enabled him to produce this superb performing group and get it to play with marvelous precision, flexibility and tonal beauty, but which at the same time exhibited the musical flaws that contradicted the obituary extravagances about him. Alan Rich's "A Titan's Last Bow," for example, took flight in a piece of fancy writing about a Reiner invented to fit what he wrote: a Reiner who was one of the "vanishing breed" of the "German-classic" school, which Mr. Rich distinguished from "the Italian school of Toscanini and De Sabata, or the Franco-Russian school of Koussevitzky, Monteux and, by adoption, Stokowski." The earmarks of that German-classic style included "probity, self-effacing eloquence, clarity of stick technique, aloofness (both musical and personal)"; and "most of this fit Reiner like a glove. As an interpreter of the German classics . . . he was above

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reproach"—his Beethoven *Eroica* being "next to unapproachable. Now he is gone, and the loss is irretrievable." Merely to think of Monteux's sober, self-effacing conducting style, with its clear stick technique and aloofness, and then of the contrasting operations of Koussevitzky and Stokowski, is to realize the absurdity of grouping the three in a Franco-Russian school. If, moreover, one considers that probity, self-effacing eloquence and clarity of stick technique are what all the men who worked with the Italian Toscanini talk about, and that the German Furtwängler exhibited the opposities of self-effacing eloquence and clarity of stick technique, one realizes that Mr. Rich's nationalistic categorizing is nonsense. More important, I can recall no performance by Reiner—whether of the German classics (e.g. Beethoven's Ninth) or Mahler's Fourth or Verdi's Requiem or the most recent Berlioz *Les Nuits d'Eté*—that did not leave him open to reproach for erratic details of tempo that flawed the musical object he was producing. The loss of Toscanini, Beecham, Cantelli was irretrievable; but not the loss of Reiner.

Martinon too I knew from excellent recorded performances of Berlioz pieces; and in Carnegie Hall he turned out to be not only a conductor able to secure from the orchestra the superb playing it was capable of, but a musician who could pace and shape Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony very effectively. Brahms's Fourth, however, he performed with changes of pace—including the traditional slowing down at the point in the finale where Brahms explicitly requests no change—which kept the work from having the sustained continuity and cumulative power that Toscanini's steady tempos gave it. Chicago, it appeared, is like Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland and New York in having a magnificent orchestra but not a conductor capable of producing with it great performances of the classics of the orchestral literature.

The Hunter College series, "The Piano Sonata," offered several recitals at which sonatas by composers from C. P. E. and W. F. Bach to Roger Sessions were performed by Ralph Kirkpatrick, Mieczyslaw Horszowski, Leonard Shure, Alfred Brendel and Beveridge Webster, and what were announced as two lecture-recitals on the history of the piano sonata by Glenn Gould, but turned out to be long lectures with only an occasional phrase or passage played on the piano. Of the recitals I was able to hear only those of Shure and Brendel. Several years ago I heard Shure give very fine performances of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 109 and Schubert's C-minor; and I attribute his lessened impressiveness in Beethoven's Op. 110 this time to an unusually bad piano that produced tone of poor quality and little resonance. He also played Weber's rarely performed Sonata in A flat, which I heard his teacher Schnabel, in 1939, make attractive with an enchanting grace that Shure could imitate but not equal; and Schumann's equally unfamiliar

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Sonata in F minor, which I found as uninteresting this time as when Josef Hofmann played it in the 20's. Brendel I heard for the first time, with interest aroused by some of the reviews of his records, and by one statement that he was, "with Glenn Gould . . . easily the most interesting and impressive of the pianists to have appeared in the last decade." There may be an Alfred Brendel of whom this is true; but it was not true of the one who produced a well-phrased and coherently structured performance of Schubert's C-minor that revealed impressive technique and musical intelligence, but nothing like the powers of Gould or of Cliburn, the pianist I would bracket with Gould. I cannot imagine Gould or Cliburn producing the unpleasant tone that prevented me from hearing anything else in Brendel's performance of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata. Brendel also gave me my first hearing of Liszt's Fantasia quasi sonata *Après une Lecture de Dante,* which I found as empty and boring as his other pretentiously serious large-scale works.

Gould's lectures call for discussion at some length, which will have to wait for the necessary space.

COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Sirs,

Mr. B. H. Haggin, writing in the Music and Ballet Chronicles of the Winter 1963-64 issue of THE HUDSON REVIEW, refers to some observations that appeared in my music columns in *The Nation,* notes his inability to verify these by examining the scores of the works involved, and draws from this the inference that "the things discussed by Boretz that I couldn't find in the scores of (various works) exist only in the highly elaborated and impressive-sounding Boretz prose." Now while I am prepared to accept on faith Mr. Haggin's self-professed score-reading difficulties, I am also obliged to point out that these hardly provide a sufficient condition for his conclusion; and while I am indeed flattered by the remarkable suggestion that my own imaginative capacities are such as to have been capable of inventing all the extraordinary things I am able to hear and describe in the compositions of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Schubert, I am reluctantly forced to point out, for conscience's sake, that such a supposition is completely, and demonstrably, unfounded.

It should be made unequivocally clear, first, that the point at issue in Mr. Haggin's statement, as well as elsewhere in his paragraph where he insists that my words have no "exact meanings," is not a disagreement about the proper *interpretations* of musical facts, about which I

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would have no wish to enter into a dispute with a writer who is not, by his own frequent admission, a practicing professional musician, but the mere *existence* in the cited works of the musical facts my words describe. And when Mr. Haggin speaks about "exact meaning" in ordinary-language journalistic writing about music, he is either demanding something which as music journalists we both know to be ludicrously impossible, or else he is himself guilty of using words imprecisely; but if what he really meant to say was that my words have no precise *significations* in terms of actual musical events, that is simply not true, as I shall demonstrate.

Naturally, a full citation of all the individual musical facts that are referred to by my remarks would—since they were, after all, selected for their prominence and frequency of occurrence in the works I discussed—occupy far more space than I can reasonably suppose THE HUDSON REVIEW is willing to devote to the listing of measure, beat, and stave numbers in four rather large published scores. Let me, therefore, take just one statement that Mr. Haggin finds unverifiable, in relation to a single work, the Mozart K. 491 piano concerto, and indicate a few places in the score that correspond precisely to the terms of the quoted segment, which speaks of a "range of associations that can be generated from a single idea (two notes, actually, first heard as the third and fourth notes of the opening melodic line, and later expanded to full sections side by side)." The "two notes," to begin with, are the A-flat and G in the strings and bassoons in m. 3; the "associations" are the events that explicitly include the assertion of these pitches or of the interval they determine; and their "range" is from such a simple correspondence as their immediate restatements in m. 5, and in the first oboe at its first entrance in mm. 8-9, to the larger events (elaborations as triads, contour extrema of linear configurations, harmonic determinants, etc.) observable in mm. 10-28, at the cadence in mm. 33-34, in the passage between m. 35 and m. 62, the "deceptive cadence" at mm. 72-73, and the entire large succession thereafter, notably including the cross-rhythmed chromatic line between upper and lower woodwinds, and the unaccompanied opening notes of each of the piano's first two phrases at its entrance in m. 100, as well as the middle voice in mm. 102-3, and the upper voice at the end of the second phrase (mm. 106-7), to name only the most obvious and earliest occurring instances. "Full sections side by side" also abound, the most extensive being the two middle sections of the second movement, where the succession G—A-flat determines the relationship between the tonicized areas. In passing, it might also be worthwhile to mention the bass of the opening of the finale, as well as the piano figuration at its following entrance, and to hint that the "range of associations" also includes a play between the progressions of VI-V or V-VI in minor and those in major, as well as between the two VI's of the respective modal scales, themselves related by the interval mentioned earlier.

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If these few examples still leave questions in Mr. Haggin's mind about the reality of the events—however trivial he may wish to consider them, for the issue here is, it must be emphasized, *not* their significance but only their existence and specifiability in the scores—referred to by the words he quotes, I am prepared to indicate in Mr. Haggin's own scores all the occurrences relevant to my statements, as well as to supply any other educational deficiencies for Mr. Haggin or any other interested reader on request, for an appropriate professional consideration. But if he then still persists in maintaining the non-existence and non-specifiability of these events, I would most urgently insist that he name the events he *does* find occurring at the places I designate rather than the pitch successions I see in my scores and am prepared to mark in his—on the assumption, of course, that my lingering suspicion that we have not been looking at the same scores at all is groundless.

Beyond this, I leave it entirely to Mr. Haggin's own conscience whether the high moral indignation he so often hurls at the incompetence of others will now be directed at his own, and whether he will now feel impelled to make a consistent judgment regarding the appropriateness of further critical activity on the part of the one culpable individual over whose actions he can at last exert significant influence.

BENJAMIN BORETZ
Music Critic, *The Nation*

Dear Sirs,

The instructor in a university English department who first brought Mr. Boretz's writing to my attention said that although as a musically uneducated reader he didn't understand it himself it sounded impressive and authoritative, and he therefore thought it should be of interest to a musically educated person like me. And he said this again when I reported that I didn't understand the writing even when it dealt with matters as familiar as Beethoven's Eighth Symphony and Schubert's Ninth. This man and I define the entire range of the readers of the writing, who bring to it varying backgrounds of musical education and experience but are alike in the fact that they read criticism because they listen to music, and they understand it when it refers to things they can hear in the music. Thus the English instructor, even without musical education, had understood things I had written because they had referred to things he could hear; when he couldn't understand Mr. Boretz's writing it was because it referred to things he could *not* hear; when I said *I* couldn't understand it it was because, even with my musical education and my familiarity with the music discussed, I couldn't hear the things Mr. Boretz referred to in Beethoven's Eighth and Schubert's Ninth (by "hear" I mean both actual hearing

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of a performance and imagined hearing of what I read in the score when I looked it up); and it was probable that what the English instructor and I couldn't understand, the readers between us couldn't —for the same reason—understand either.

I have gone into this matter of hearing because it is the crux of what Mr. Boretz deals with in his communication. When he wrote about the associations "generated from a single idea (two notes, actually, first heard as the third and fourth notes of the opening melodic line . . .)" in Mozart's K. 491, it was because of his contention that an awareness of these associations (the "unmistakable plot lines" of the work) was "a minimum requirement if the music is to hold any interest for either performer or listener"—which is to say that the performer, himself aware of those generated details, must play them in such a way that as they occur in the course of the performance the listener's ear will be caught by them as something he associates with the two notes in the third bar of K. 491—"associates" meaning that the detail presented to the listener's ear at a later point in the work has the recognizable identity which the generating two notes established in the third bar—an identity of physical shape given them by their rhythmic characteristics, and of the musical effect they have in the context of what they follow and are followed by.

Specifically, the A-flat and G in bar 3 are given a particular shape by being the stressed initial half-note and unstressed final quarter-note in the three-four bar; and they are heard with the effect not of something isolated and complete in itself, but of something inconclusive moving on for completion by the F-sharp leaping up to E-flat (two quarter-notes) in the next bar. And specifically, the A-flat and G in bars 106-7 that Mr. Boretz cites have a totally different shape as the unstressed final A-flat of three(all quarter-notes) in 106, followed by a stressed G at the beginning of 107; and they have a different effect as the concluding notes of a melodic phrase beginning in bar 104. As a result, neither in my actual hearing of the work in the Glenn Gould performance nor in my imagined hearing of it when I looked through the score did the A-flat and G as presented to the ear in bars 106-7 "associate" themselves with—i.e. have or suggest the identity of—the A-flat and G as presented in bar 3; nor do they now after Mr. Boretz has pointed to them. The same is true for me of the A-flat and G that begin this melodic phrase in bars 104-5 (another instance cited by Mr. Boretz)—the A-flat a dotted half-note, the G the first eighth-note in a scale passage that falls away from the long A-flat. It is true for me of the two analogous successions at the beginning (G and F) and end (C and B-natural) of the preceding melodic phrase in bars 100-3 (also cited by Mr. Boretz). It is true for me of the oboe's A-flat and G in bars 8-9 (also cited by Mr. Boretz), which are the first two in a sequence of three half-notes: A-flat, G and F-sharp. It is true for me of the other details that Mr. Boretz identifies adequately in numbered bars; and I assume I would find it true of the details he doesn't

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identify adequately even in such bars, or in the swirling Boretz prose about the events in long passages like bars 10-28 and 35-62. For the instances I have dealt with suffice to establish that what he calls associations are any and all instances the eye can detect of an A-flat followed by a G—or any other note followed by a note at an interval of a second—with no regard for the particularities of relation in time, consequent shape, or context which create in each instance not the similarities that would strike the listening ear as associating the pitch succession with the A-flat and G in bar 3, but the dissimilarities that cause the ear to hear it as something which does *not* associate itself with the A-flat and G in bar 3, and in some instances not to hear it at all.

Actually, that is, the pitch succession Mr. Boretz points to in the accompaniment chords in bars 102-3 is one which the ear—with its attention on the melodic statement of bars 100-3—will not notice, unless the performer emphasizes it sufficiently to draw attention away from the melody, and in so doing to distort the passage. And actually, even when the ear does hear the pitch successions Mr. Boretz points to at the beginning and end of the melodic statement in bars 100-3, it hears them—because of their shape and context—merely as part of that melodic statement; and the emphasis in performance that would be required to get the listener to give special attention to them and perhaps to associate them with the A-flat and G of bar 3, would produce a distortion of the shape and expressive meaning of the melodic statement. Not only that, but the distorting emphasis which claimed the listener's attention for those pitch successions in bars 100-3 would be taking that attention away from the important dramatic happening in the "plot line" of the movement that it should be concentrated on—namely, the first entrance of the solo piano with a new melodic statement with which it establishes its identity as against the orchestra's. And so with other details of this kind that Mr. Boretz contends the performer and listener must give their attention to: they would take that attention away from the happenings of the real "plot line" that it should be concentrated on.

I find Mr. Boretz's way of dealing with K. 491 not just amazing but ludicrous; nor is it of course the only thing that is ludicrous in his communication. And having, in his anger, let his pompousness produce a burlesque of itself, he has made it difficult to read his writing hereafter without laughing. Which leads me to add that a prominent composer whom I encountered in the street last December brought up what I had written about Mr. Boretz and assured me that he was a good musician. I replied that I had been concerned with—and had expressed my opinion of—only what Mr. Boretz had written; whereupon the composer said plaintively: "Yes, but they're *all* writing like that. It's the influence of————————at Princeton."

B. H. HAGGIN

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Reviews

DENIS DONOGHUE

The Good Old Complex Fate[1]

"It's COMPLICATED, being an American," says Louis Simpson, as if he only had escaped alone to tell us. The complications get worse as you go West. In San Francisco:

> Here I am, troubling the dream coast
> With my New York face,
> Bearing among the realtors
> And tennis-players my dark preoccupation.

Two stanzas later we meet Whitman, then Pascal, the realtors again and the city-planners, and then more pain. It's "this middleclass life" that gets Mr. Simpson, all those suburbs, "lives as dry as tortoises." Whitman's Open Road goes to the used-car lot, hence the title of Mr. Simpson's book. And then there are all those redwood trees, waiting for a redeemer: "O if there is a poet / let him come now!". Mr. Eliot wanted a Redeemer called the Word: Mr. Simpson lowers the case, "I seek the word"; which crudely translated means I wish to god (l.c.) I had something worth writing about. Hence the desired figure is not God or even a Lady-in-white from "Ash Wednesday": only a poet will do. Sometimes, as in the early Yeats, the imaginative force is given as a white bird flying across the sea, but it doesn't matter, because "the word is not forthcoming." The trick then is to make wordlessness your word, silence your speech. I hazard a guess that Mr. Simpson wants his confrontation of New York and San Francisco to do as much for him as the confrontation of America and Europe did for Henry James. And now that the Jamesian juxtaposition has lost much of its meaning

[1] AT THE END OF THE OPEN ROAD by *Louis Simpson*. Wesleyan University Press. $1.45. FLOWER HERDING ON MOUNT MONADNOCK by *Galway Kinnell*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.00. THE WRECK OF THE THRESHER AND OTHER POEMS by *William Meredith*. Knopf. $4.00. ALCOOLS by *Guillaume Apollinaire*. Translated by *William Meredith*. Doubleday. $4.95. KISSING THE DANCER, AND OTHER POEMS by *Robert Sward*. Cornell University Press. $1.75. THE BUZZARD AND THE PEACOCK by *Ned O'Gorman*. Harcourt, Brace, and World. $3.95. EXPRESSIONS OF SEA LEVEL by *A. R. Ammons*. Ohio State University Press. $4.00. THE BREAKING OF THE DAY by *Peter Davison*. Yale University Press. $1.25. HELMETS by *James Dickey*. Wesleyan University Press. $1.85. POEMS by *Carlo Betocchi*. Translated by I. L. Salomon. Clarke and Way. $4.25. (Paperbound, $1.95) GALGENLIEDER by *Christian Morgenstern*. A Selection translated and introduced by *Max Knight*. University of California Press. $4.00. A PEOPLED LANDSCAPE by *Charles Tomlinson*. Oxford University Press. $3.75. CASTILIAN ILEXES: VERSIONS FROM ANTONIO MACHADO by *Charles Tomlinson* and *Henry Gifford*. Oxford University Press. $2.90.

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American poets will probably drive themselves to invent new Wars between the States to replace the epic-journeys between Boston and Rome. Or Mayan remains will replace the stones of Venice. In Mr. Simpson's lower case the feeling is: if only he could find some good primitive experience beneath that Californian surface, "the aboriginal American devils" which reappear as "serious life"; if only he could feel the trembling of the veil. Meanwhile the only answers are a little Late Romantic irony and a few compensatory dreams. Better still if he could be a farmer in Minnesota and then, dying, go to the angels and "shine in the hands of God" (*stet*). Or at least keep his chin up:

> Whitman was wrong about the People,
> But right about himself. The land is within.
> At the end of the open road we come to ourselves.

(But haven't we been there before?)

Every decent poet is entitled to one "Gerontion," and this is Mr. Simpson's. I hope he doesn't propose to push it to extremes; already the hum and buzz of explication are a little too audible. The best poems in the book are "My Father in the Night Commanding No" and "The Riders Held Back," two poems, incidentally, which forget about San Francisco and New York and mind their business. In the weaker poems Mr. Simpson takes unto himself "all that grave weight of America" as if he were Charles Atlas. One of these days he should take a sabbatical and spend it loafing in Whitman's East.

Perhaps the Pacific is to blame, bringing out the oracle in modest men. Galway Kinnell ends one of his new poems:

> I know that I love the day,
> The sun on the mountain, the Pacific
> Shiny and accomplishing itself in breakers,
> But I know I live half alive in the world,
> I know half my life belongs to the wild darkness.

—and the other half perhaps to Daddy, or Senator Fulbright? Then on the next page:

> But what if a man feels the dark
> Homesickness for the inconceiveable realm?

—more dark preoccupations, now for sale at ten a penny. But even in the East Mr. Kinnell has his troubles, and because Whitman wrote "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" Mr. Kinnell writes about the East River which he calls, winsomely, "the River that is East." A boy swings his legs from the pier and all that grave weight of America bears down upon him through Citizen Kane, Nick Adams, Eugene Gant, Huck, and other props until he sees the *Ile de France* and wonders

> if in some stateroom

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There is not a sick-hearted heiress sitting
Drink in hand, saying to herself his name.

Maybe there is, but it's too late for James Dean to play the boy and Jo Van Fleet the woman even if the script is half written:

We who have no roots but the shifts of our pain,
No flowering but our own strange lives.

There is more Big Talk in this little book than any little book should be asked to support, and this is a pity because when Mr. Kinnell takes his complex fate less glumly he can be a pretty fair poet. He has written one of the better memorial poems about Robert Frost, and he is the only one I know who can write a poem to tell Denise Levertov the kind of poem she should write. The problem is that his New Imagism is only the Old Imagism scored for 'cello. Watch what he can do with a fish:

A pause: out in the dark
The distant dull splash of a fish.
Yet again. Sick of weight
It leans up through its eerie life
Towards the night-flash of its emblemhood.

This man's problem is genuine: he wants things to mean. Right. And he may think that his attention to things is a full commitment, loyal, devoted, to "the thing itself," but it isn't; he merely takes things as his text and gives sermons on them. A flower, for instance, in the title-poem, grows up high, but Mr. Kinnell isn't satisfied with that—though God is—and he worries it until the growth becomes "the appeal to heaven" and the petals fall "in self-forgiveness." I am sorry to say this, because Mr. Kinnell is on the right side and he tries harder than most poets to rid himself of the notion that things become important when they happen to him, the Poet, *ipse*. But he doesn't try hard enough. The result is that everything becomes a doppelgänger, as in the poem of that name:

I could make out a beggar,
Down the long street he was calling *Galway!*
I started towards him and began calling *Galway!*

—and the whole thing would never have happened, anyway, I believe, if the walls in Anne Sexton's "The Division of Parts" hadn't creaked "Anne! Convert! Convert!"

If Galway Kinnell were a friend of William Meredith (and perhaps he is) the best review of his poems would be a copy of Mr. Meredith's new book and a request to "cf. p. 46"; which includes the following:

My desperate friends, I want to tell
Them, you take too delicate offense

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At the stench of time and man's own smell,
It is only the smell of consequence.

And having read p. 46 he would race through the entire book and then go back over the poems and take them slowly, plot, action, character, thought, melody, diction, phrase, word. It is a magnificent book, faults and all. The basic difference between Mr. Meredith and most poets is that he writes well; he uses language as a good dancer uses his body, he knows what he is doing and he does it. He can be seduced, sometimes by the *Collected Poems* of Robert Frost, and there are pages in which he goes to bed with Frostian parables and the morning after writes lines like "Nothing for love, all for neighborhood." And when he is complacent he is jaunty in Frost's way, which of all ways is the worst. But when he is good he is very, very good. I should guess that he loves courtesy, ease, grace, tact, ballet, gaiety, opera, modesty, lines on a human face. And I know (from the poems) what he doesn't like: cheap despair, "a naive disillusion," *O altitudo* effects, Big Talk, the easy kind of simplicity which undersells the genuine, hard-wrought article. And Mr. Meredith is a master of the occasional poem: "On Looking into Robert Frost in Kanji", "At the Opera", "A Young Girl Reading the *Poetics*" (I'll quote this last one):

"It follows that we must draw men
Either as better than in real life,
Or as worse, or as they are."
Look, Time is wrinkling his wife:
A smooth-browed girl reading Aristotle,
Her notebook open and white,
And as much to the years as the girl
I say, write.

And there are excellent translations from Apollinaire, five in all, culled from the big book of *Alcools* with certain changes of phrase and punctuation which will tease Mr. Meredith's bibliographer.

Clearly, to write as well as Mr. Meredith does you have to get rid of all excess baggage; in this poet's progress the complex fate of being an American is the first to be thrown overboard. Thus relieved, he can concern himself with the much more complex fate of being human. He brings to this concern, quite simply, attention; or rather, everything he means when he uses that word, as in "A Ritual Mouse":

Surely there is always that in experience
Which could warn us; and the worst
That can be said of any of us is:
He did not pay attention.

This is to work the word very hard, but it can stand the pace. In the best of the poems Mr. Meredith's attention is the charity which begins

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at home and then goes abroad and acknowledges whatever it meets; like the charity which, watching ballet-dancers, acknowledges their splendour and regrets that "it cannot reproduce its kind." And the attention is never predatory.

Mr. Meredith introduces and praises the new poems of Robert Sward and says that he could not have written them. Could not, perhaps, because he has his own furrow to plough. Like Mr. Eliot introducing Marianne Moore to English readers, Mr. Meredith feels that Mr. Sward is very good but can't quite say why. My praise would go along with his, but it would be a little quieter. Mr. Sward's poems—many of them—seem to me very good in a repellent way. His style is often arch and tricksy, especially when he squeezes single words as if they were lemons:

> Stare. Faces. The faces
> Stare. And breathe, breathe.

Admittedly, he's trying to do a job on a *National Geographic* photograph, but there are some things a camera can do that language can't. And he can be tricksy even on less specialised occasions. Often he gets his effects by tearing his subject to shreds or worrying it long after the next man—you or I—would have left it in peace. This is poetry as *The Dumb Waiter* is drama; it is what it says it is, in a nutty way or to a nutty degree; as in "All the Mornings," and "In Cities," where the phrases gasp like savages lost from their tribe. Some of the poems, like "The Apteryx," are fun in a Marianne Moorish way. Others, like "Kissing the Dancer" and "Mert," are as naïve as early Cummings and charming in that way. The vaguely neurotic poems, like "I Have Just Bought a House," are the kind of thing that Harold Pinter does better in the theatre, in any event a special taste. And some poems, like "Albany Park" and "The Ceiling," are good in their own way, in Mr. Sward's way.

Or in one of his several ways. Mr. Sward is an adept of discontinuity, hence perhaps his recourse to photographic effects. Some of his poems sound like the script of *Last Year at Marienbad;* one of his best pieces is a hilarious gloss upon the advertisement which coos, "You are the very Air he Breathes"; and the last poem, "Barbecue," sounds as if Mr. Sward saw the film *Picnic* and determined to remake it into the terrible poem it should have been, full of malignant transformations:

> The bushes became the lawn;
> The night, the earth; and the moths, the sun.
> The men became their wives; and the wives
> Became the men, for the most part re-
> Marrying themselves. The men were asleep
> Beside their wives, smiling, spitted, still
> Illicit.—Morning. My wife and I
> Sipped gin; I was Bernie, and she the moths.

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Mr. Sward is very much present in that discrimination, "for the most part."

Ned O'Gorman comes to us again, Sir Herbert Read his John the Baptist, Hopkins his Moses. He has been everywhere, seen everything, conned all his lessons. Dylan Thomas:

A
rabbit runs upon his green fancy.

Hopkins:

Christ
rides the hills
where snails
prod
light from the buckling dirt
and the plow lurches
stirred to cut.

The Dark Set:

(How dark
My dark blood, how rank my heart.)

Wallace Stevens:

It is light we seek. Light
at light's midpoint. The mute
light at the dull center
of sound. Light. The bud,
the phrase, the climax.
Exemplum: Yeats, Catullus;

And Yeats:

When I die I pray I'll rot
among the ugly and their kind and when
beauty hacks my soul out of her loathsome
net, in that frigid journey to the pitch
I'll jab the ass of that pale bitch who
laughed me with her dazzle to my grave.

Mr. O'Gorman is on visiting terms with God, Christ, the Virgin Mary. His style affects the 3500 GT Maserati Sublime:

And when his body burst
its traps and stood graced in knells leviathan,
soul broke through scales and braids of oil
and sailed entranced upon a grazing sea.

The Buzzard and the Peacock begins as if it had a theme: for buzzard, read Will, for peacock, Mind. There is talk about "the correspondence / of the day, the stars and the spirit," and if this is familiar

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Stevensland it is better than no land. But an early poem predicts the victory of Mind, and that finishes that. For the middle of the book is a mere doodle. Indeed, the only poem worth its salt, the only occasion when he has something in front of him more important than the taste of all those big juicy verbs, is "To the Memory of Lydia Hoffman." I would not suggest that Mr. O'Gorman give up calling on God, but attention to Miss Hoffman does far more for his mere poetry.

Stevensland is the present residence of A. R. Ammons; not Stevens' Florida or Guatemala, but the cool, dainty land of the middle poems, with *Harmonium* safely tucked away. The title-poem, for instance, is a variation on "Credences of Summer":

> is there an instant when fullness is,
> without loss, complete: is there a
> statement perfect in its speech.

Mr. Ammons' strategy is to calm things down until a sensory heaven is visible in a grain of sand. Or, alternatively, to set up pleasing dialogues between himself and mountains, wind, God, cedars; the pious hope is thus to heal the breach between Man and Nature. There is something rather touching about all this, even if the best in this kind are but shadows of the Master. It takes a certain grand piety, these days, to use phrases like "the decimal of being" and "No creation equals a moment's consciousness" so soon after Stevens' death. And who could be impatient with a poet who reminds you of a dozen well-loved Stevens poems by such devoted pastiche as this?

> A tea garden shows you how:
> you sit in rhododendron shade
> at table
> on a pavilion-like lawn
> the sun midafternoon through the blooms
> and you. . . .

There is nothing like a game of solitaire under the oaks on a Sunday morning, followed by a session with the blue guitar, then a reminiscence of Key West and an easy trip to New Haven. The only problem is that Mr. Ammons' poems sound as if they were written by the Letter C. He has one called "The Golden Mean," for instance, which trips among the daisies of discrimination:

> What does
> wisdom say:
> wisdom says
> do not put too much stress
> on doing; sit some and wait,
> if you can get
> that self-contained:

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but do not sit too much;
being can wear thin
without experience:
not too much stress on thrift
at the expense of living;

—a cautionary tale of no account except for a passage further on which will be a great comfort to little, short men when they set out to be lovers.

There is more meat to chew in Peter Davison's book. He is a no-nonsense poet, with as much fluency as he needs to assure himself that he does not need to be glib. He can be modern and ironic when the occasion serves, but he never congratulates himself, never loves himself too much. Some of his poems, such as "The Massacre of the Innocents" and "Summer School," are too slack; they need a hard, tighter organization, the kind of organization featured in the splendid satires of Austin Clarke, or William Empson's early poems. And the poem "Goodbye" is a sprawling thing when it should be sharp. "The Peeper" is much keener, and "Artemis" is, in this line, a triumph. I wish I could claim that I discovered this poem, but Dudley Fitts saw it first and gave it due acclaim.

Mr. Davison's complex fate is that of being half a Jew and half an Anglican. This has incited him to a sequence of seven poems based on the story of Jacob wrestling with the Angel till the breaking of the day. Mr. Fitts considers the analogy decorous and praises the poems. But they seem to me the weakest part of the book. Mr. Davison is claiming a Belsen of feelings which are far in excess of the facts as given. It is probably awkward to have Mother Jew and Father Christian, especially if Mother won't tell you the difference between the Talmud and the Pentateuch and Father keeps on saying that it doesn't matter. But it's hardly enough to make a *Crime and Punishment* or to justify Old Testament comparisons. After a poem in which Mr. Davison implies that he's in an even worse position than the Greeks, he and his book end with:—

I shall never know myself
Enough to know what things I half believe
And, half believing, only half deny.

Perhaps not; but the smiling poet on the dustjacket gives me the impression that he's not so badly off, after all, and there's still time to sort things out. Meanwhile he should go easy on the Bible, slow on his fate.

James Dickey's new poems are moving beautifully. "Goodbye to Serpents" is the swan-song of Jamesian confrontations, a farewell not only to the Jardin des Plantes but to modes of being forever blocked off; thus one returns to Georgia or Oregon, knowing that one has not been moved enough by the things one has moved through. So much for Europe, handed over to the tourists; so much, too, for that

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way of being an American. The poems in this book are written in the American grain on American soil; images of survival, in many cases, designed to hold out the continuing possibility of rising to local occasions, American occasions of insight. Mr. Dickey is devoted to the "spirit of the place," always mindful of its powers and ready to attend them in his own way which is not the same as William Carlos Williams' way. Many of his poems are experiments to see how gracefully the poet can proceed between clouds, grass, pools, horses, soldiers, dead bodies, reaching into the silence when justice has been done. The human sound of these poems arranges and enthralls and enchants the acres, otherwise wild, and prepares hopeless things for miracle.

But Mr. Dickey is never wide-eyed, his miracles are never cheap. He has one object: to do justice; to be faithful to human life. And because the object is so fine and his talent so strong, he is rewarded with several splendid poems. It is useless to quote, unless to give an entire poem, because the quality of the feeling reveals itself in the action of the whole poem and not—or inadequately—in the single phrase. He puts most of his trust in the large structure of fact or event and gives only the bare minimum by way of gloss. He likes words, but only when they are intimate with things. From the present book each reader will make his own selection, according to his taste and scruple. There are some poems, like "Approaching Prayer," which try hard for a high object and impress as mighty efforts, but I propose to live without them and to prefer those shorter poems in which the tone is less imperious. I have in mind poems like these: "Springer Mountain", "The Scarred Girl", and "Bums, On Waking." Especially "The Scarred Girl," which is one of the finest short poems of this century, all humanity, all justice.

Humanity and justice are more steadily available in contemporary American poetry than we have the right to demand. In recent months (not to invoke a longer perspective) I have found them in certain beautiful poems by Mr. Dickey, some by Mr. Meredith, a handful by Celeste Turner Wright (notably "The Paper Flowers", "Daguerreotype", and "Inscription Rock") and a new sequence by J. V. Cunningham ("To What Strangers? What Welcome?") in which Wisdom and Wilderness are at poise. (But this is a story for another occasion.)

Meanwhile some of the best qualities in American poetry are found when a poet pays his respect to other modes of being, other complex fates, on other continents: the translators, again, are like bulwarks. Mr. Meredith is a case in point. I like his poems better than Apollinaire's, but part of what I admire in them is the attention—we come back to that—which he is prepared to lavish upon other things, not his invention. When I. L. Salomon attends to the poems of Carlo Betocchi, his own humanity and justice are repaid in a marvellously transparent English (or call it American, I don't care):

Now it is time for the broken shadow

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to play the game of other days
over the walls in the sundrenched dawn
in imitation of its uncertainties. . . .

—which is language without smog. (We need it.) When Max Knight translates the *Galgenlieder* of Christian Morgenstern, he may wish to prove that Huizinga was right in *Homo Ludens,* or he may feel like making the American language joyce a bit, or again he may be responding to Kenneth Burke's admonition, "When in Rome, do as the Greeks"; or (my favorite guess) he may want to show the sick jokers how the thing should be done, by a master. Be these as they are, the work is magisterially "done."

A new poem by Charles Tomlinson, "Return to Hinton," raises the possibility of a new theme: the complex fate of being an Englishman. Mr. Tomlinson is very much an Englishman, but he has been wooed by America, the readers, poets, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Dr. Williams, publishers, magazines, prizes, universities, the "rich and nervous land." But all this, which comforts the heart, is in another sense Death, and Mr. Tomlinson is quite prepared to sound like Kipling if that tone is necessary to deal with the serpent; because he must warn himself, as an Englishman, that the American dream is not his:

Our language is our land
that we'll
not waste or sell
against a promised mess
of pottage that we may not taste.
For who has known
the seasons' sweet succession
and would still
exchange them for a whim, a wish
or swim into
a mill-race for an unglimpsed fish?

This is not my favorite tone; in my own case I should hope to return to Dublin without feeling that the hand that fed me an easy year was aimed at my jugular. But let that pass. Mr. Tomlinson's language is indeed his land. I have already praised his style in this journal, and the first point to make about the new poems is that they consolidate the style without extending it quite as much as I hoped. Mr. Tomlinson still writes with the old tact, the notable grace of *Seeing is Believing.* He is still an adept of relation, civility, reticence. But his interiors are a little too Dutch, his landscapes not sufficiently peopled. (His West of England looks too much like the West of Ireland, beautiful and desolate.) Many of the recent poems retard the drift of human life until it becomes a photograph, "interesting," no doubt, but a *little* dainty. He speaks of the proper plenitude of fact, but he doesn't get enough of this into the poems, and what is there

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is eked out by comment, gloss, Sabbath Sermons. And if his language is his land, perhaps this is to be taken along with the corresponding fact that his land is a little thin; and here we would insert his own fear that England, ten years hence, will be a mere footnote to the human text. This would explain why he has spent some time and energy trying to enrich his language, driving himself through the kind of concern which brought Dr. Williams to the three-ply line of *Paterson*. I assume that Mr. Tomlinson has been searching for the kind of contact-speech which Dr. Williams sought and occasionally achieved, Contact rather than Vision; but I am not assured that he has found it. His poems are still playing it very cool: he loves to get himself into a solitude which resists everything that eludes its scope. I think his best bet now is to think out again the entire position of the detached spectator. This position is congenial to him, else he would not have gone to school with Wallace Stevens. But I should guess that he is somewhat in the position of those contemporary philosophers who think that the picture of life as "objects" contemplated by "subjects" has been examined and glossed as fruitfully as the case allows and that nothing of further use can be expected; this "image" of life now seems archaic. The favorite rival image is drawn from the analogy of drama; man as agent, participating in (not merely contemplating) a drama. Another version of this is the imagery of Contact, in American literature largely derived from Whitman and tuned for modern voices by Dr. Williams. I think Mr. Tomlinson has begun to feel that Vision is not enough; like those readers who for the same reason find Stevens either offensively or pleasantly irrelevant to their "needs." (The ramifications are thorny. Stevens and Eliot, notably, present the Good as Consciousness, and Consciousness as Vision. Question I: *Why?*) Mr. Tomlinson is moving toward the Contact-men. This goes against his English grain, but he is a scrupulous man. In one of his "Four Kantian Lyrics" he speaks of "marrying" with a land, and I am sure this is the kind of thing he wants, this is the complex fate he would willingly suffer. But so far it is a marriage in name, without the embarrassment of touch, of Contact. And perhaps this, or a fear that he is not living up to his own new metaphors, is pushing him toward Tyutchev and now toward Machado in the new *Castilian Ilexes* which he has englished with Henry Gifford. If Machado "answers," he will coax Mr. Tomlinson out of his neat self, with poems like "Portrait", "Poem of a Day", and "The Ephemeral Past." And if a few critical unpleasantries would help to push Mr. Tomlinson into "marriage," I would be pleased to offer them, though I cannot claim to be his Best Man or to hold the ring. Otherwise stated; I wish he would now write a book called *Touching is Believing* or *Action is Believing*. And I wish he would read Yeats again as if for the first time. And Whitman, for good measure. He has already paid his debts to Ruskin, to Mr. Eliot, to the tribe of Wallace and Marianne and Bill. We await his next.

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MARIUS BEWLEY

Blake and Some Recent Critics

In 1799 the Rev. John Trusler, author of *The Way to be Rich and Respectable,* briefly considered using Blake as an illustrator for his books, but on inspecting Blake's drawings he found them obscure and unintelligible. Blake wrote to him in one of his earliest letters to be preserved: "I am happy to find a Great Majority of Fellow Mortals who can Elucidate My Visions, & Particularly they have been Elucidated by Children." Blake was scarcely being candid. Although in later years he so much regretted the lack of an audience that he told Crabb Robinson he had contemplated burning his manuscripts, he normally had little objection to being thought difficult. In that same letter to the Rev. Trusler he wrote: "That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care." And he believed that "the wisest of the Ancients" had often deliberately darkened their truths in obscure myth and symbol as too sacred for the multitude. It appears that Blake often followed the same practice.

Most of us know very few children today who might be trusted to elucidate Blake's visions. The problems of critical interpretation that he presents are thornier than with any other English poet, and this is not simply because it is often difficult to uncover his meaning. The more urgent question is how far, for the sake of the poetry itself, detailed exegesis of Blake's symbolism and "system" is profitable. Probably to no other English poet was meaning more important than to Blake. He believed in his vision of Man with a passion and purity that sanctifies it, and for this reason, if no other, his "system" cannot be separated from the poetry as easily as one feels it is possible with Yeats.

Even in his most simple-seeming lyrics Blake's meaning is always complex. His metaphors refuse to register their full value unless placed firmly in the full context of his thought. As an illustration of this one might well look for a moment at his early lyric from *Poetical Sketches,* "Mad Song." Simple as it is, it takes on an entirely new poetic dimension when read in the light of his "system":

> The wild winds weep,
> And the night is a-cold;
> Come hither, Sleep,
> And my griefs unfold:
> But lo! the morning peeps
> Over the eastern steeps,
> And the rustling birds of dawn
> The earth do scorn.

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Lo! to the vault
  Of paved heaven,
With sorrow fraught
  My notes are driven:
They strike the ear of night,
  Make weep the eyes of day;
They make mad the roaring winds,
  And with tempests play.

Like a fiend in a cloud,
  With howling woe,
After night I do croud,
  And with night will go;
I turn my back to the east,
From whence comforts have increas'd;
For light doth seize my brain
With frantic pain.

Although Blake had not developed his "system" when he wrote this, it is implicit in the poem by a kind of clairvoyance or intuition for which Blake's earlier writings are remarkable. The poem is about the plight of fallen, rational man, who through denial of impulse, acceptance of arbitrary "morality," belief in the "closed" Newtonian universe and the "closed" Lockean mind, and because of submission to the double yoke of Church and State, has denied the infinite potentiality of his own nature, and constructed an artificial Selfhood. The purpose of this acquisitive and possessive Selfhood, which Blake later called the Spectre, is to conform man's personality to the restraints and strictures of the fallen world. This it does by denying the imagination —and to Blake the imagination was divine: the man who lived in it fully was identical with God.

It soon becomes clear that certain images always carry specific set values in Blake's poetry. Images of storm, and particularly of coldness of all kinds are always associated with rationality; sleep becomes symbolic of man's fall from Imaginative Unity into schizophrenic rationality; the Sun is the symbol of the Divine Imagination itself, and the east, associated with it through the dawn, is also the home of Luvah, Blake's symbolic figure representing emotion: and for Blake emotional and imaginative life are not separable. In Newton's mathematical universe it seemed to Blake that the heavens and the stars were not a doorway into the Infinite, but an artfully constructed barrier that shut man up in a rational world, and closed him off from Eternity. These heavens Blake named the Mundane Shell, or, as in "Mad Song," "the vault/ Of paved heaven."

Even for as simple and straightforward a poem as "Mad Song" a considerable acquaintance with Blake's ideas is necessary. These ideas are in no sense extraneous to the poem, because it does not come alive as achieved art unless one is familiar with them. But in the light of

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these ideas the images immediately acquire a sharply defined concreteness. Any suggestion of vagueness is completely obliterated, and one of the chief beauties of the poem is seen to be its magnificent economy of statement. Although for years it has been generally agreed, on very good circumstantial evidence, that the seventh line of the first stanza should read, "And the rustling birds of dawn," rather than "the rustling beds of dawn," which was the way the line was originally printed, on the score of meaning alone it seems to me the rejected reading (which is certainly more beautiful) should be preferred. This poem is about a man who is confronted with the threat of awakening from his rationalist sleep into imaginative life: therefore, "rustling beds" suggests the fitful stirring of the uneasy sleeper under the dawning imagination much better than "rustling birds." Furthermore, since the sleeper is afraid to awaken into life, very much as the protagonist of *The Waste Land* is afraid of the returning life of April, "rustling beds of dawn" can also be read as the threat of the nightmare that follows in the last two stanzas.

What we have in this poem, then, is a picture of the ordinary, conforming man, cherishing his "rational" sleep, and afraid to cope with the intensities and greatnesses that "safely" slumber in his own nature. Winter keeps him warm, covering earth with forgetful snow—and he wants it that way. He resists the breaking dawn of the imaginative Day—and it is, significantly, the redemptive eyes of day that shed tears because he refuses to be redeemed. And so he becomes "a fiend in a cloud." The cloud is his material body. Water in its various forms usually signifies materiality for Blake. He has become a fiend through frustration, through having accepted the eighteenth century "closed" vision of man and the universe. He has denied the imagination in the interests of the rational, and there is a splendid irony in the title of this poem about a thoroughly rational man—"Mad Song." His lot is the representative one: that is why Blake chose the verb "croud" to describe him in his endless striving to be always on the dark side of the world, away from the Sun of Imagination. Most of us, Blake is saying, are with him, and the scene is necessarily congested. The speaker in this poem is driven by a compulsion that reminds one of the Ancient Mariner, but he has had no vision, and is desperately trying to escape having one. The last lines of this poem correspond remarkably to the opening lines of *The Waste Land,* for light means to Blake what April rain means to Eliot: and in a fallen, in a totally perverted world, the symbol of life inspires dread.

I have taken this somewhat circuitous route of approaching the books on Blake to be reviewed here[1] because, unlike many readers

[1] THE NEOPLATONISM OF WILLIAM BLAKE, by *George Mills Harper*. Univ. of North Carolina Press. $7.50. WILLIAM BLAKE: A READING OF THE SHORTER POEMS, by *Hazard Adams*. University of Washington Press. $10. BLAKE'S APOCALYPSE, by *Harold Bloom*. Doubleday. $5.95. VALA, OR THE FOUR ZOAS: A Facsimile of the Manuscript, A Transcript of the Poem, and A Study of Its Growth and Significance, by *G. E. Bentley, Jr.* Oxford. $26.90.

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of Blake, I believe a knowledge of his "system," his symbols, his cosmological myths, his epistemology, are essential to understanding him, not as a "thinker" but as a poet. Yeats's ideas provide a scaffolding without which many of his best poems could not have been written; but having been written, the scaffolding can often be removed. This is not true with Blake because his ideas are not a scaffolding for his poems at all; his poems are dovecotes to which his ideas bring back life and beauty and movement. One has to know the doves by name to respond fully to any poem. Ideas that inhabit poems as living things do not explain the poems as much as they create them, and that is why exegetical and interpretative books on Blake's poetry are rarely without profit.

For most readers of Blake the initial and deepest difficulties are probably not in the interpretation of symbolic and mythic detail, but in coming to terms with several of his central ideas. Blake believed that man was God, and that physical nature—the world of time and space—was illusion. Man re-entered Eternity from which he had fallen into this world simply by developing his visionary capacity and *looking through* the surfaces of what the rationalist believed to be material substance. Neither of these ideas was at all new in Blake's time. The idea of man's divinity was, indeed, shortly to be popularized in America by Emerson. Blake might write:

> Thou art a Man! God is no more;
> Thine own Humanity learn to adore.

But there is nothing more odd about that than about Emerson's somewhat similar remark (among many that might be cited):

> I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect. I am somehow receptive of the great soul, and thereby I do overlook the sun and stars, and I feel them to be the fair accidents and effects which change and pass.

Blake's belief in the illusory quality of the material world is more difficult for most readers to encompass imaginatively. Blake makes it sound rather esoteric:

> This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity: It is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite & Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite and Temporal. There exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Glass of Nature.

But of course this is neither new nor esoteric; it is straightforward Platonism, and one has to search no further than Plato's cave in Book VII of *The Republic* to discover an obvious source for it. In his 1917 essay on Blake, T. S. Eliot wrote: "We have the same respect for Blake's philosophy . . . that we have for an ingenious piece of home-

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made furniture: we admire the man who has put it together out of odds and ends about the house." Apart from the fact that this description is far too condescending, one might say that Blake has employed some highly distinguished odds and ends. The influence of Plato on Blake was long ago recognized. S. Foster Damon commented on it in 1924 in his pioneering book on Blake interpretation, and Miss Kathleen Raine has recently published a hundred-page essay on the subject. But *The Neoplatonism of William Blake* by Mr. George Mills Harper is the first full length study we have had of it.

Despite the somewhat restrictive implications of the title, this book provides an excellent introduction to Blake. It looks directly and insistently at his central ideas in the light of an important philosophical tradition, and they become accordingly less eccentric and more readily apprehensible. The eighteenth century had not looked on Plato or his followers with favour, which was no doubt one reason Blake found them attractive. But towards the end of the century a kind of Platonic revival occurred in England with the translations of Plato and the Neoplatonists by Thomas Taylor. Between 1787 and 1804 when the *Works of Plato* appeared, Taylor published twenty-one books, mostly translations of the Greeks with his own commentaries. There is virtually no doubt that Blake read them, and he may even have known Taylor personally, for the two had a mutual friend in the artist John Flaxman.

In his concluding chapter Mr. Harper sums up Blake's relation to this Platonic revival:

> The first important writer to find stimulation in the new mode was William Blake. . . . Not apparently until he became absorbed in reviving "the lost art of the Greeks" did he discover a philosophical structure which he could use as a framework for his artistic perception of the ideal nature of reality.

The body of the book itself consists of a series of chapters that offers a firm and illuminating exposition of how the Platonic Theory of Reminiscence and the Theory of Ideal Forms are at the very heart of Blake's thought, and shape his myth. In Blake's poetry the former becomes a subtle instrument for destroying the Lockean psychology, the latter a means of undermining the material and mechanical universe of Newton. Even Blake's peculiar theory of man's fall from the unity of the Divine Imagination into the multiplicity of generation is shown to be related to the Neoplatonic theory of emanations, as well as Plato's treatment of the One and Many. Most interpretations of Blake have begun with the details—the particular symbols and myths—and worked their way inductively towards a discovery of the ideas. Mr. Harper's method makes for economy and clarity, and relieves Blake of some of the lonely oddity that attaches to him when he is viewed in a perspective dominated by figures like Swedenborg or Boehme.

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Mr. Hazard Adams' *William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems* is a very different kind of book. We are given three hundred large pages of detailed exegesis of individual lyrics. It is inevitable that in reading any Blake lyric one must interpret it in the light that can be shed by the Prophetic Books. With few poets, as Mr. Adams clearly recognizes, does this method of tracing out interacting veins of imagery and symbol between early and late poetry, pay off more richly. The difficulty is that the method is not an economical one, and Mr. Adams employs it with occasionally exhausting prodigality. The chief fault of this book is one that he shares with many excellent Blake commentators: lack of critical economy. Meanings are hammered out with the ruthless determination of Los at the forge creating Urizen's backbone.

Mr. Adams also has a fondness for graphs and diagrams one wishes he would deny himself. One or two of them are perhaps helpful, but all of them are dispensable, and collectively they introduce a smell of machine oil into the pages. On the whole, this is a less suggestive book—though still a valuable one—than *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision,* which Mr. Adams published in 1955. There is a point in interpreting and explaining difficult poems beyond which the critic ought to place some faith in the intelligence and integrity of the reader. "The Mental Traveller" is one of Blake's most difficult poems. Criticism has come a long way towards understanding it since Pierre Berger threw up his hands in despair over it in 1907. But I find the four or five pages Mr. Adams devoted to it in 1955 more illuminating than the twenty-three pages (and two graphs) he devotes to it in the present book. As with his commentary on "My Spectre around me night and day" (nineteen pages), by the time one has mastered the explanation one finds one's interest in the poem itself flagging. Perhaps the single best chapter is the one devoted to "The Tyger," which has been available in a critical anthology in slightly altered form for some time. Some of the commentaries—the one on the "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence,* for example, are fine, but seem to me to add little that is material to Joseph Wicksteed's study, *Blake's Innocence and Experience,* that appeared in 1928.

In 1961 Mr. Harold Bloom published *The Visionary Company,* a critical study of the major Romantic English poets. The first 120 pages were devoted to detailed discussions of Blake's principal poems, and now in *Blake's Apocalypse* Mr. Bloom has expanded the 120 pages into 436. The earlier book reads like an abridgement of the later, and although *The Visionary Company* was a hard book to understand (reviewing it for *Encounter* Mr. C. S. Lewis found it the most difficult in his experience), I have been obliged to return to it on one or two occasions to seek help in understanding a few pages in *Blake's Apocalypse.* His comments on "The Crystal Cabinet" in the larger book, for example, repeat with very little expansion what he said on that poem in the earlier book. Yet the first statement is notably more lucid.

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The follow-up analysis hovers just short of unintelligibility. However, such instances are exceptional, and the second book ends up by being much the better on Blake.

To undertake reading Blake's three major Prophetic Books for the first time can be a trying experience to any one. No matter how warm one's affections may prove at last, the first plunge must be into dark and sinister looking waters. Even the long septenaries in which the major Prophecies are written have a forbidding look on the page. It is precisely here that Mr. Bloom's study seems to me to have a very considerable value. His commentaries on *Vala, or the Four Zoas, Milton,* and *Jerusalem,* make up slightly more than half the book, and this is not too much space. Although Mr. Bloom has not quite lost his habit of concentrated cryptic expression that was so irritating in the past because it defeated his critical purpose, his manner in this book is for the most part ingratiating. He presents himself as a guide, and in this role he is so sensitively responsive to the qualities of Blake's poetry in the Prophetic Books (a virtue other commentators on them have not invariably shared), and he holds the tortuous subtleties of Blake's proliferating myth so firmly and clearly in mind, that it would be a rare reader who could not profit by what he has to say.

Mr. Bloom quotes copiously from the major Prophecies, and he does so in a way that calls attention to many passages of brilliantly effective poetry that few readers, labouring over them in context, would have noticed. The trouble with septenaries, even when rhythmically taut and controlled, is that they deaden the eye. Whoever designed this book is to be congratulated for he has neatly arranged the septenaries into a typographical pattern, making them *appear* shorter without mutilating the line, that is not only more pleasing to look at, but curiously seems to underline the energy and life of Blake's rhythm. Perhaps it was an accident, but if so it is one that should be repeated. Anyone who has not read the major Prophetic Books could do nothing better than pay them a preliminary visit under Mr. Bloom's guidance, for if this is a book of often sensitive criticism, it is also a highly satisfactory Baedeker through one of English literature's most formidable countries, and I know no other book on Blake that functions quite in this way.

Blake has been peculiarly fortunate in the facsimile reproduction of his engraved and illuminated books. The magnificent reproductions of the William Blake Trust are among the most beautiful modern books in existence. The recent facsimile of *Vala, or the Four Zoas,* edited with a critical commentary by Mr. G. E. Bentley, Jr., is perhaps not so breathtaking to look at as the Blake Trust's colour reproduction of *Jerusalem* that was published twelve years ago, but it is a richly impressive production. This was the only remaining Prophetic Book to be reproduced in facsimile, and the magnitude of the editorial task involved makes it easy to understand why. It is an immense book, fourteen by eighteen inches, and heavy enough to require being de-

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livered from the book shop by van. Written on proof sheets for Blake's illustrations for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts,* the poem was never finished, but was endlessly though unsystematically revised over a number of years, and finally abandoned for *Milton.* The first title, *Vala,* refers to the early version of the poem which Blake began writing about 1797. Vala was the female symbolic embodiment of fallen nature, who seduced man into a denial of imaginative vision and an acceptance of this life of corrupted reason. Revisions and additions to the text led Blake to centre his interest elsewhere than on Vala, and the Zoas came to dominate the myth Blake was creating. The Zoas, named after the four beasts whom St. John saw in *Revelation* flanking the throne of God, are for Blake the four primary faculties or senses of man. He names them Urthona (spirit); Urizen (reason); Luvah (emotion); Tharmas (perhaps the senses). In the perfect unity of the Divine Imagination they exist as the Eternal Man, who is identical with God. But an imbalance occurs in the harmonious adjustments among themselves that must be preserved—an imbalance arising from a jealous or aggressive motion on the part of one, and a Fall occurs. This Fall in fact constitutes the creation of the material world and of generated man, so it is something entirely different from the Christian conception in which the Fall occurs *after* creation. This is the basic myth of Blake, and while it had been given very partial embodiment in some of the Lambeth books, notably *The First Book of Urizen,* this great sprawling unorganized "epic" is where it is given its most complete expression.

The facsimile reproductions of the text (145 photographic plates) together with detailed information on erasures, deletions, textual additions, etc., with which Mr. Bentley has annotated his transcript of the poem that introduces the plates, make it generally clear for the first time what a chaotic state the manuscript is in. Whether or not the text hitherto has been so imperfect in the several earlier editions on which critics have relied in making their interpretations of *The Four Zoas* (Mr. Bentley seems to think it has been) as to invalidate much of what they have said about the poem, is something that could not be answered without detailed study. But in notable instances of critical misinterpretation based on a faulty text to which Mr. Bentley calls the reader's attention, it is difficult to share his imagination of disaster.

The drawings, usually in pencil or crayon, with which Blake decorated these manuscript pages, are usually quick sketches, and they are frequently of peculiar freedom and beauty. As the pages he was writing on were proof sheets for his illustrations for *Night Thoughts,* we are given an ample number of his finished engravings to compare with his drawings, and the advantage is entirely with the latter, many of which, despite their unfinished state, seem to belong among Blake's most vital drawings. A number of the figure studies remind one of Chagall's quick sketches.

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

Scrutiny Ten Years After

TO READ THROUGH THE TWENTY VOLUME REISSUE OF *Scrutiny*[1] means inevitably for anyone who was up at Cambridge during its existence to go back over youthful allegiances and animosities, to re-live the difficulty of "belonging" either with the *Scrutiny* group or with its adversaries. It was not simply a question of "a plague on both your houses": the presence of Leavis at Downing College, so long unhonoured by a university appointment, and the sheer fact of his critical and editorial achievement, voiced a living accusation of "the other side." Cambridge treated Leavis abominably and a nice act of poetic justice has been achieved in that the *Scrutiny* reprint issues from the University Press. The complete file of the review amply records that, whatever was wrong with *Scrutiny,* no comparable English periodical spanned twenty one years—1932 to 1953—of our intellectual life. Its role, as Leavis himself pointed out, was Arnoldian, facing and coping with the situation first diagnosed in Matthew Arnold's two great essays, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" and "The Literary Influence of Academies." Almost at the centenary of the appearance of these in *Essays in Criticism,* 1865, we still have to find answers to their fundamental questions and it was to these questions that *Scrutiny* passionately addressed itself from the thirties on.

Besides the debt to Arnold the fundamentals of *Scrutiny* owe a good deal to T. S. Eliot, despite a later tendency to force an either/or between him and D. H. Lawrence. Leavis' "a sense of relative values in the concrete," stressed early in the review, comprises a rephrasing for critics of Eliot's own dicta in "Tradition and the Individual Talent": "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead." There is a connection furthermore with the thought of J. Middleton Murry in his essay "The Cry in the Wilderness" of 1920: "We think it would be easy to show," he writes, "that in the last generation . . . criticism has imperceptibly given way to a different activity which we may call appreciation. . . . Reasoned judgments of value were rigorously eschewed . . ." And Murry's positive to this negative appears in his "Poetry and Criticism" where we read: "One must establish a hierarchy, and decide which act of comprehension is the more truly comprehensive, which poem has the completer universality. One must

[1] SCRUTINY. Volumes 1-20. Reissued with an Index and Retrospect. Cambridge University Press. Set $125.00. Single volume $6.50.

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be prepared not only to relate each poetic expression to the finest of its kind in the past, or to recognise a new kind is being created, but to relate the kind to the finest kind."

This, basically, is what *Scrutiny* set out to do. Operating in, to use Arnold's own words, "an epoch of dissolution and transformation," an epoch when "habits, ties and associations are inevitably broken up," *Scrutiny* said no to both the Marxising left and the Anglican right and set about establishing what Arnold demanded, namely "a sovereign organ of opinion" which would, as it was hoped, supply a "tone of the centre," a centre that would permeate its surroundings with "fresh thought, intelligent and alive."

In an article "Restatement for Critics" (vol. I, no. 4) where "a sense of relative values in the concrete" appears, we find Dr. Leavis developing corollaries to that conception of a centre which Arnold thought he saw in the French academy: "No effort at integration," writes Leavis, "can achieve anything without a centre of real consensus—such a centre as is presupposed in the possibility of literary criticism and is tested in particular judgments." The possibility and the test of which Leavis speaks resulted in some of the best criticism in *Scrutiny* and, in turn, were the basis for a number of important critical books, fruits of the *Scrutiny* ideal. Virtually all of Leavis' own major efforts, with the exception of *New Bearings,* began in this way, as articles written to equip "a centre of real consensus"; so did much of the work of L. C. Knights. D. W. Harding's recent *Experience into Words* began as contributions to *Scrutiny*—some of the most rewarding pieces on Eliot to be found in the review are from his hand and his work often supplies a note that is wanting in those pages, namely a genuine irony, urbanity and modesty, rather closer to the Arnoldian "tone of the centre" than perhaps many of Leavis' own pieces and certainly than those of his more mimetic followers. Music criticism in the review by W. H. Mellers had a consistency and live awareness of what was going on that would be difficult to match in any contemporary British periodical. *Scrutiny,* then, afforded the testing ground for the thinking out of books as widely different in their spheres of concern as Mellers' own *Music and Society,* Martin Turnell's *The Classical Moment* and *The Novel in France,* Marius Bewley's *The Complex Fate,* G. H. Bantock's *Freedom and Authority in Education,* John Speirs's early and invaluable little guide, *The Scots Literary Tradition.* There are still unquarried books to be found in the file of *Scrutiny*—one on French poetry, perhaps, in Turnell's articles and a substantial one on Jane Austen based on Mrs. Q. D. Leavis' "A Critical Theory of the Writings of Jane Austen." All of the good work in *Scrutiny* clearly benefited from the sense that it was *wanted,* albeit by a small and exacting public (the Schoenberg and Wittgenstein circles must have supplied a similar feeling of a close, compelling and radical undertaking). The critics' awareness of writing for an inner group also had its less happy

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side. If it was invigorating to feel that one was working for one's peers, danger threatened in that once the group terminology had evolved ("moral," "organic," "maturity," "vital," "reverence for life"), once one had mastered the right tone (via a gusty impatience with fools and philistines, the *Times Literary Supplement,* the British Council, the Auden group), the game became slightly too simple to play: a sterile facility of tone which disfigures some of the earlier articles comes more and more to the forefront in later issues and it is enough for a book under review to be weaker than its author's previous one for a serious *moral* decline to be hinted by the unsmiling reviewer. The bludgeoning style is there already in Mrs. Leavis' piece on Virginia Woolf, where she shows how silly many of the latter's attitudes were. She is quite right and these bubbles could have been deftly pricked and burst, but the demolition, "twice done and then done double," results, as the bad side of *Scrutiny* so often does, in one's feeling that one would prefer the company of the victim to that of the executioner. (Leavis on Sir Charles Snow is a late example of this, and heaven knows few of us have much love lost for Snow in the ordinary run of things.) Righteous indignation is a necessity, but righteous indignation gone through for the edification of "the group" is a bore to outsiders—not to say a warning to would-be-fellow travellers. It was this air of moral exaggeration that put off many critics and writers who disliked academic and journalistic stupidities as much as Leavis did. If his magazine were to go forward, it obviously needed to recruit new contributors from among such people. As it was, *Scrutiny* fell increasingly into the hands of ready imitators of the master's style. L. C. Knights, one of the editorial board, supplies us in a recent article, "In Search of Fundamental Values" (*T.L.S.,* July 26, 1963) with a measure of what was wanted to further this broadening of scope: new people were needed and so were new approaches. "The study of literature cannot remain self-contained," says Knights. "Indeed it is my own conviction—even more now than it was in the days of *Scrutiny*—that there is important work waiting to be done 'on the frontiers,' where the study of literature joins hands with the study of history, philosophy, theology, etc. But"—and the qualification stems out of what is best in *Scrutiny* awareness—"it will need to be done by those who really know what literature really is, not by specialists in other subjects who merely look to literature for documentation."

Arnold, in putting forward "particular judgments" (in his essays on the Romantics for instance) and in positing the need for "a centre," had had a twofold aim, first to "make the best ideas prevail" and furthermore "to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself." Criticism for Arnold was a means of insuring the continuity of culture and of fructifying the creative artist, for this latter is what "the creative power" clearly signifies. It is "the creative power" that, for all talk to the contrary, often seems

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peculiarly slighted by the performance of *Scrutiny*. The more one reads on and the more one is constantly reminded by contributors that attending to poetry is a kind of spiritual athleticism, the less one feels that any actual poet would have been able to travel very far with the Scrutineers. In Volume 7, plans for a "corresponding bureau," "to foster individual talent by criticism before publication" sounds a little too much like the spider's invitation to the fly. What one too frequently misses in *Scrutiny* accounts of the poetic experience—a lack that manifests itself in a kind of determinedly impatient earlessness of style—is something that Professor Knights has come latterly to place more and more emphasis on: the fact that the reading of poetry involves relaxation of spirit as much as it implies the bracing of it. In the *T.L.S.* article from which I have already quoted, Knights says: ". . . wide and voracious reading is as necessary—especially for the young—as the ability to concentrate all one's powers for an hour; and even in the most concentrated act of attention to literature there is a quality of relaxed absorption that makes activity like rest."

In saying that "the creative power" seems oddly slighted by the performance of *Scrutiny,* one has in mind two particular examples. In Volume 1 we get our warning: "*Scrutiny* will also publish original compositions. Since, however, more people are able to write good criticism than good verse or short stories, we commit ourselves to no large or constant proportion of creative work." That is fair enough and the manifesto in which it appears makes trenchant reading. The trouble is, acting on the warning of "no large or constant proportion of creative work," the editors simply got lazy or were more interested in the critical than in the "creative" work: they evidently weren't curious enough about the live creation that was going on. What, in fact, "no constant proportion of creative work" came to mean was "no creative work." The Index of "Poetry Published" contains, by living authors, a handful of poems of Ronald Bottrall's, three bad American poems, two pathetically thin renderings of Góngora into English and a couple of dullish pieces by C. H. Peacock. For twenty years this is miserable. My second example of creativity slighted—albeit unconsciously and, if unconsciously, so much the worse—comes in Leavis' "Retrospect." This document makes painful reading. We are told again, as we have been told so often before by Leavis, of his fight with Cambridge and his distrust of Eliot. Had the Retrospect been able to draw on a little of that invaluable Arnoldian irony, we might have profited by its writing. As it stands, with Leavis recalling for us that Eliot once rejected one of his essays for *The Criterion* and that this brands Eliot as an irreparably frightened man, one is tempted to add that it was this frightened man who went on to write the major courageous poems of our era, a realisation that gets squashed out of existence by the unmitigatedly resentful account of a thirty year old wound. "A Retrospect" abides too repetitively by the (undeniable)

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importance of the critical function. Leavis' imagery is betraying here. He defines the nature of *Scrutiny's* seriousness when he says: "Our special business was literary criticism but we saw nothing arbitrary in our taking the creative process of criticism . . . as representative and type of the process in which the human world is created and renewed and kept living . . ." Ought not Leavis to be saying "art" here where he says "criticism"? Criticism *may* be creative but it is not as creative as that.

In re-experiencing such dogmatism of tone, one returns to the question of allegiances with which I began. How could the criticism of the *Scrutiny* group ever really evolve into "a common pursuit" when its founder knew so thoroughly what other people *ought* to think (see his head-teacherly chastening of more than one correspondence in *Scrutiny*) and when that *ought* led more and more away from so many figures that "the creative power" has subsequently found so fructifying?

One does not wish to leave the reader here with the sense of a total and rigorous exclusion such as Leavis' enemies speak of. The case is more subtle than that. One has only to look, for example, at the space given to foreign books to see that there is far more of it than has ever been admitted. I have already mentioned Mr. Turnell's essays on French poetry: his evaluations of Corbière, Laforgue and Verlaine are excellent (he is less rewarding, incidentally, on Rimbaud) and, extending from Jean Giono on to Sartre and Camus, there are some valuable and timely pages—Leavis is quite correct in claiming that *Scrutiny* was early in the field (he says "first") with its reports on the last two. Mallarmé received in Volume 7 some searching attention from Professor James Smith in an article which is less well known than it should be—characteristically it sees far more clearly what is "wrong" with Mallarmé than what is "right" with him, what, that is, has proved suggestive for subsequent poets and for other creative talents as various as Pierre Boulez, Juan Gris and Willem de Kooning. Besides French, *Scrutiny* paid intelligent attention to the course of post-romantic and modern German letters and was fortunate in attracting some of the best work of D. J. Enright in this field: his essays on Goethe, on Hoelderlin, George and Rilke (there was also a fine and early account of Rilke by the late Richard March) still make instructive reading despite the fact that greatly more is now in print on these figures than when Enright and March first wrote. D. A. Traversi's pieces on Italian literature (he is particularly rewarding on *I Promessi Sposi*) suggest that there was much that could have been done in this area. Modern Spanish literature was somewhat passed over. A more serious—because more active failure to transmit—occurs in the *Scrutiny* version of modern American poetry. Here the news was simply falsified and Leavis himself was to blame on several counts: he dismissed William Carlos Williams' crucial appearance in the *Active*

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Anthology, he dismissed Marianne Moore and he convicted Hart Crane on the charge of alcoholism—Crane is not a difficult poet to search for bad passages, but a critic who can see no further than these is an impatient one. Marius Bewley did a little last moment rescue work in urging the claims of Robert Lowell and Wallace Stevens in 1951, but in an article containing the mysterious judgment that Ezra Pound "with much less ability and a different orientation . . . might have stayed at home and become another William Carlos Williams." This was written after the publication of *The Desert Music* in 1949 and, whatever it means, it is plain that its author had a very vague notion of what Williams' staying at home involved, while its valuation of Pound is wearily in tune with the whole tendency of *Scrutiny* to denigrate the Pound of the Cantos. Despite Ronald Bottrall's review of *A Draft of XXX Cantos* which discovered there "some of the most memorable verse of our time" ("perverse though [Pound's triumph] may be"), *Scrutiny* failed signally to isolate what was important in the subsequent Cantos. Of *A Draft of Cantos XXXI-XLI,* "I confess," writes the reviewer (John Speirs this time), "I have not laboured hard to 'understand' the latest Cantos," and Muriel Bradbrook, on *The 5th Decad of the Cantos,* finds that they exhibit "the ferocity of a poseur," that "There are betraying symptoms . . . of a sort of literary fascism." Her whole performance is exasperatingly lazy—done for the benefit of the group with their predictable "I told you so." From now on they needn't read the Cantos. Nor did they. The Pisan sequence was not reviewed and when Leavis mentions it, to snipe in passing, it is clear he has no conception of its actual contents. To write off one of the finest achievements of our time, one surely needs that sense of values in the concrete of which we heard so much.

Not only do Pound, Williams and Miss Moore go down under the *Scrutiny* thumb, even Robert Frost fails to pass muster: "I find it difficult to review the poems of Mr. Robert Frost, they left me with little more than an ill-defined general impression." Thus Geoffrey Walton on Frost's *Selected Poems.* "I then looked at the introduction and back at some of the poems, and I was still not very impressed." This is a good example of *Scrutiny* tone when it goes wrong, the "I" paraded with wooden superiority, the banana skin unnoticed under the descending, magisterial foot.

It seems odd that a milieu which could recognise the force of, and devote some of its best criticism to American prose—to Cooper, Hawthorne, Twain, James and Mrs. Wharton—should have been so blind to the American tradition in poetry, for the inability to see it for what it is extends back beyond Williams, Moore, Crane, etc., to both Whitman and Emily Dickinson. James's early attack on Whitman, "brilliant" and "radical" according to Mr. Bewley in Volume 16, is good enough for *Scrutiny* although it wasn't good enough for James who went back on his youthful opinion and, as Mrs. Wharton tells

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us, grew to admire the poet. Bewley finds her evidence "far from convincing," but fails to infer from her quite detailed account of the way James *read* Whitman, that the novelist had discovered the real secret of the tone and movement of Whitman's broad line. To write off, in a footnote, Whitman's "effusions"—is the great and brilliantly structured elegy on Lincoln an effusion?—merely shows critical perversity. And what of Emily Dickinson? She is "remarkably uneven,"—true yet scarcely the overriding impression we take away from reading her; "the poetry is, if anything, *too* simple"; there is a "very small body of valuable poetry," but she remains "minor." All this, by John Farrelly, is in qualification of Mr. Chase's view of Emily as the "greatest of women poets," perhaps closer to the mark than that grudging "minor." In its assessment of American poetry *Scrutiny* was not, by and large, much worse than its critical contemporaries, but for a magazine which vociferously claimed and frequently exemplified intelligence, the failure remains a major one.

The very last volume of the *Scrutiny* reissue consists of Leavis' "Retrospect" and the index. The Authors, Artists and Composers section of this index is a peculiar compilation and, coming as it does immediately in the wake of Leavis' piece (were the other editors, by the way, not consulted for *their* view of the venture?), it leaves a very odd impression indeed, one that seems to summarise the *Scrutiny* undertaking itself—an impression of passionate concern running too often to repetitive fanaticism and constriction. It is the indubitable seriousness and force of *Scrutiny* at its best which makes one feel in this constriction an almost tragic wastage. The index both illustrates the range of the magazine and the almost deliberately off-hand and insulting way with writers not approved of, a mechanical adoption of Leavis' least happy mode that seems to freeze off the sensibilities of those who copy it. One begins to ask whether Maurice Hussey, who compiled the index, did not perhaps decide to lighten his task by parodying this high *Scrutiny* manner. Under Pound, Ezra we find referenced:

> career,
> coarseness,
> critical powers discredited,
> immaturity,
> Provençal enthusiasms rejected.

If these were worth listing, then why not the positive things that were said about Pound in the earlier issues? The index here falsifies both Bottrall's account of the Cantos, already noted, and John Speirs's wholly positive review of "Homage to Sextus Propertius"—done at a time, let it be remembered, when it was still in order in academic circles to see the poem as a series of howlers. If *Scrutiny* thoroughly approves of a given writer we get a referencing of the positive as quaint

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as these negatives. For example, under T. F. Powys we find the triumphant:

charges of blasphemy and bawdiness refuted.

The great and good Apollinaire, however, goes down with:

lurid imagination,
pettiness of images.

Poor Faulkner (Hemingway gets slightly higher marks) earns:

his characters often not worth his attention,
simplicity,
technique uncertain.

And Hart Crane:

rhetoric and rhapsody,
rhythmic nullity.

Perhaps the most ludicrous of these potted judgments appears under the name of Wagner:

talents of a second-rate order.

Back in context this appears as "a very remarkable talent of a second-rate order." What the index does by snipping in this case—and it is not the only one—is to give the appearance of more than *Scrutiny* rigour to the judgment: Mellers' own unfortunate phrase, robbed of its qualifying adjective, becomes merely ridiculous.

I have probably already dwelt too long on this section of the index, but its cocksure tone, its arbitrariness (Miss Moore, though reviewed, and Williams, though dealt with, get no mention in it), its parade of the *Scrutiny* bludgeon (Dorothy Sayers goes down with a tediously long comet's tail of negatives), all these stress what is most contorted in the review and show how easily its tough-mindedness could become self-caricature. It would be true to say that the index, by its weird isolation of oddity, is positively unfair to the most fertile insights of *Scrutiny,* though much of the oddity is of course *there* in the articles to which it points us back. One is left with divided feelings. Single minded and often just, *Scrutiny* undoubtedly was—who is there teaching English today who does not owe it an immense debt?—but in experiencing once more its corporate existence, one experiences, too, the need for a fresh departure and a fresh voice. Perhaps the urgency with which that awareness presents itself is also, in part, a tribute to the challenge of *Scrutiny*'s having existed.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

The Holy Family

THESE ARE BOTH, SURPRISINGLY, FIRST BOOKS,[1] by critics whose names have long been familiar to readers of the New York literary and political journals. *Doings and Undoings* is "the first book of the most brilliant young critic of our day." Podhoretz himself, taking over from the shill on the jacket, declaims in his own precocious voice that he "chooses to be a critic of the contemporary rather than a browser among masterpieces or a reverent interpreter of the classics." And again: "A literary critic ought—or so they tell me [who are "they"? the editors of the Cuyama Valley Poetry Journal?]—to regard literature as an end in itself; otherwise he has no business being a literary critic. For better or worse, however, I do not regard literature as an end in itself . . ." Podhoretz appears also to believe that his collection was not "written by a single person. How many people wrote it, then? Two, I think, or possibly three. I am one of them." This is the sort of private notion that a writer may lean against, in moments of depression, to nerve himself for the gratuitous effort of carrying on (I *am* progressing, I am *not* repeating myself, I am *too* smarter than I was); but private notions don't necessarily coincide with ascertainable facts, and it is a fact for the reader that the same voice drones on in the same doomful, humorless, cosmopolite-social-historical-tragical tone through the vicissitudes of these occasional pieces.

Mrs. Trilling doesn't need to cheer herself up with such an avowal of serial schizophrenia; she comes right out and admits that her essays were "all written by the same person." On the other hand, she resembles Podhoretz in shrinking from the imputation of mere belletrism: "the diverse essays in this book are unified . . . by a particular point of view common to them. The point of view is perhaps best described as 'social.' Even in those essays which deal with individuals . . . I think there is always a discernible reference to the entity we call society . . ." And she has her own private notion—it might be called a regional commitment—with which to sustain herself, that the still center of the turning hub of Western civilization is a small residential neighborhood contiguous to Columbia University: "The title of this volume is taken from the small street in New York City on which I live, Claremont Avenue . . . more than a street, Claremont Avenue is a neighborhood, with all this implies of a cultural as well as geographical discreteness within the larger city scene . . ." For those who might protest that she is simply indulging a whim—a family joke, perhaps—with her title and its explanation, Mrs. Trilling is candid enough

[1] DOINGS AND UNDOINGS, by *Norman Podhoretz*. Farrar, Straus. $4.95. CLAREMONT ESSAYS, by *Diana Trilling*. Harcourt, Brace & World. $4.75.

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to produce a pyrotechnical eye-opener: "The Other Night at Columbia: A Report from the Academy," an essay justly celebrated as one of the most entertaining self-exposures by a public woman since Lady Godiva.

"The Other Night at Columbia" was first published in *Partisan Review* five years ago. Nominally it is an account of Mrs. Trilling's speculations about Allen Ginsberg and the Beats on the occasion of Ginsberg's reading his poetry at Columbia. Actually, it is a cosmic melodrama in one act, which takes place in a shabby anteroom of Heaven, rather like the setting in which one imagines Lucifer to have challenged God on the probity of Job; there is a Prologue in Limbo and an Epilogue in Heaven; and the Narrator and Stage Manager throughout is a spiteful and disgruntled Archangel.

In the Prologue, the Narrator rehearses Ginsberg's juvenile history as "a student of my husband's":

> I had heard about him much more than I usually hear of students for the simple reason that he got into a great deal of trouble which involved his instructors, and had to be rescued and revived and restored; eventually he had even to be kept out of jail. Of course there was always the question, should this young man be rescued, should he be restored? There was even the question, shouldn't he go to jail? We argued about it some at home . . .

Who but an Archangel, speaking to the ear of God, could temper compassion with such malicious tattling sanctimony? or brandish like a gun "my principle . . . of equal responsibility for poets and shoe clerks"? or be outraged by the disappointed "expectation that a student at Columbia, even a poet, would do his work, submit it to his teachers through the normal channels of classroom communication, stay out of jail, and, if things went right, graduate, start publishing, be reviewed, and see what developed, whether he was a success or failure"? or, having revealed that Ginsberg's mother "was in a mental institution," complain about this "unjust burden for Ginsberg to put, as he so subtly did, on those who were only the later accidents of his history"? or know, with the intuitiveness of God's deputy, that "Ginsberg had always desperately wanted to be respectable, or respected, like his instructors at Columbia"? or fret the present unilluminated with do-it-yourself exhortations that take as their model the unfallen Eden of the 'thirties: "One didn't use pathology in those days to explain or excuse or exhibit oneself and one never had to be lonely"? or with confused thunder denounce the "effectlessness" of the Beats and their bourgeois patsies: "Like the respectable established intellectual [even instructors at Columbia? even those who reside on Claremont Avenue?] —or the organization man, or the suburban matron—against whom he makes his play of protest, he conceives of himself as incapable of exerting any substantive influence against the forces that condition

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him. He is made by society, he cannot make society. He can only stay alive as best he can for as long as is permitted him"?

We are transported, at length, to the event itself. The anteroom of Heaven is "Columbia's poor dull McMillin Theater," tasteless enough to display "the shoddiness of an audience in which it is virtually impossible to distinguish between student and camp-follower; the always-new shock of so many young girls, so few of them pretty, and so many blackest black stockings; so many young men, so few of them —despite the many black beards—with any promise of masculinity." The auditorium, however, does not "smell bad," and "there's nothing dirty about a checked shirt or a lumberjacket and blue jeans; they're standard uniform in the best nursery schools." Another Archangel, whose alias is Fred Dupee, presides over these petty damned with a steely aplomb that recalls Charles I or Walter Mitty at the block:

> "The last time I was in this theater," Dupee began quietly, "it was also to hear a poet read his works. That was T. S. Eliot." A slight alteration of inflection, from irony to mockery, from wit to condescension, and it might well have been a signal for near-riot, boos and catcalls and whistlings; the evening would have been lost to the "beats," Dupee and Columbia would have been defeated. Dupee transformed a circus into a classroom.

Ginsberg reads his poems, among them, notably, a "poem . . . addressed as well as dedicated to Lionel"; and—one more ray of hope—manifests in himself "the full tug of something close to respectability," for, "reading his verse," he "had naturally given it the iambic beat. . . . A poet . . . may choose to walk whatever zany path in his life as a man; but when it comes to mourning and mothers and such, he will be drawn into the line of tradition."

Finally, the stunning Epilogue in Heaven ("At Home with the Trillings"; or, "Great Moments on Morningside Heights"):

> There was a meeting going on at home of the pleasant professional sort which, like the comfortable living room in which it usually takes place, at a certain point in a successful modern literary career confirms the writer in his sense of disciplined achievement and well-earned reward. It is of course a sense that all writers long for quite as much as they fear it; certainly it is not to be made too conscious, not ever to be spoken of except with elaborate irony, lest it propose a life without risk and therefore without virtue. I had found myself hurrying as if I were needed, but there was really no reason for my haste; my entrance was an interruption, even a disturbance of the orderly scene, not the smallest part of whose point for me lay, now, in the troubling contrast it made with the world I had just come from. Auden, alone of the eight men in the room not dressed in a proper suit but wearing a battered old brown leather jacket, was first to inquire about my experience. I told him

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> I had been moved; he answered gently that he was ashamed of me. In a dim suffocated effort of necessary correction, I said, "It's different when it's human beings and not just a sociological phenomenon," and I can only guess, and hope, he took what I meant. Yet as I prepared to get out of the room so that the men could sit down again with their drinks, I felt there was something more I had to add—it was so far from enough to leave the "beats" as no more than human beings—and so I said, "Allen Ginsberg read a love-poem to you, Lionel. I liked it very much." It was an awkward thing to say in the circumstances, perhaps even a little foolish as an attempt to bridge the unfathomable gap that was all so quickly and meaningfully opening up between the evening that had been and the evening that was so surely reclaiming me. But I'm certain that Ginsberg's old teacher knew what I was saying, and why I was impelled to say it.

Why is Auden wearing that jacket? Do all poets wear the standard uniform of the best nursery schools? Is the Archangel simply recording a hard inconsistent fact of experience? Just why is Auden ashamed of her? Does he object to the young men who so conspicuously lack "any promise of masculinity"? Can we be certain that "Lionel" knew what she was saying? Why didn't she ask him later, before she wrote the essay, to make sure? Why the unexplained ambivalence toward "respectability"? Claremont Avenue's proper suit of it, the Beats' hankering after it, their bourgeois targets' ignoble possession of it? What is the difference between the "effectless," "respectable established intellectual" whom she despises and the writer whose "successful modern literary career confirms [him] . . . in his sense of disciplined achievement and well-earned reward"? Never mind. To roll and kick in such a swamp of clonic self-assertion is its own archangelic fulfillment; and may assist, perhaps, in exorcising one's last resistances to stone-cold comforts: "the tug of . . . respectability," "the line of tradition," the "well-earned reward."

Podhoretz deplores effectlessness too; he too takes the ceremonial whack at the Beats (in "The Know-Nothing Bohemians"); but he reserves his personal attention for the American Negro. The socko conclusion to his volume (it drew many excited, soul-searching letters to *Commentary,* where it was first published) is "My Negro Problem—and Ours."

The essay consists of an ostensibly ruthless self-scrutiny, documented with flashbacks to Podhoretz's childhood in a Brooklyn slum. He is a Jewish boy, who hates and fears Negroes: "To me, at the age of twelve, it seemed very clear that Negroes were better off than Jews —indeed, than all whites. A city boy's world is contained within three or four square blocks, and in my world it was the whites, the Italians and Jews, who feared the Negroes, not the other way around." He presents dramatically encapsulated recollections (traumatic? unforget-

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table?) of his childhood when he was "beaten up, robbed, and in general hated, terrorized, and humiliated." Having begun with his autobiographical testimony to this reversal of social rôles, he confesses to the ineradicable survival of his revulsions into manhood: "I know it from the insane rage that can stir in me at the thought of Negro anti-Semitism; I know it from the disgusting prurience that can stir in me at the sight of a mixed couple . . ." He infers that "we white Americans are . . . so twisted and sick in our feelings about Negroes that I despair of the present push toward integration." There is, however, a solution, shocking though it may seem (to Podhoretz): color must "*in fact* disappear: and that means not integration, it means assimilation, it means—let the brutal word come out—miscegenation." And in a highly visible anguish of spirit this patriarch pledges his women to the task: "If I were to be asked today whether I would like a daughter of mine 'to marry one,' I would have to answer: 'No, I wouldn't *like* it at all. I would rail and rave and rant and tear my hair. And then I hope I would have the courage to curse myself for raving and ranting, and to give her my blessing. How dare I withhold it at the behest of the child I once was and against the man I now have a duty to be?'"

The calculated, didactic hysteria of this essay might be more persuasive if other Jews had not had the same childhood experiences as Podhoretz. They remember the fear, the hatred, the beatings. But they also remember that every bit of information that came to them, not at twelve but from the earliest age of consciousness, out of the world at large—their parents, their older brothers and sisters at college or work, the newspapers and magazines and books and movies, every text in their schools, what they saw whenever they walked into a hotel lobby or spent a day at the beach—assured them, and the Negro, that he was dirt and the future theirs: the jobs, the blonde actresses, the power of office, the arts, the money and all the places to spend it in. And these Jews will abhor Podhoretz's *ad hoc* paradoxes, his belated and self-righteous squeals of pain; they will refuse to credit —except as a mask for other, unacknowledgeable personal problems— the image of a clever twelve-year-old Jewish city boy who didn't already know that he would be a doctor, or a university professor, living in some lily-white suburb with occasional recollections of his distaste for the Negroes of his childhood.

Mrs. Trilling and Podhoretz are both New York Jewish intellectuals. They take pride in the fact. It is the introspective material, explicit and implicit, of their more impassioned essays; they challenge the reader to hold it against them (and remind him of the six million dead); in the pages of *Partisan Review* and *Commentary* they celebrate the assumption of intellectual authority by the children and grandchildren of those hopeful dispossessed who poured into America from the pogroms of Eastern Europe at the turn of the century. Mrs. Trill-

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ing, in her essay on the Beats, celebrates it even as she mourns the loss of the idiosyncratic, communal Jewishness of the 'thirties (the comic emblem is "Michael Gold's mother, who wanted to know did her boy have to write books the whole world should know she had bedbugs"). Nobody can be more meanly intolerant, more insistent on his right to be heard whatever the quality of what he says, more confident of receiving the humbly sympathetic attention that derives from his listener's sense of collective guilt, than the member of a persecuted minority at a time when social attitudes are undergoing geological alterations (especially if, like the fly on the wheel, he considers himself the engine of these alterations). James Baldwin—not to mention eloquent representatives of the Black Muslims—addresses enlightened white audiences, who applaud wildly as he tells them how unspeakable the white man is; Baldwin is intelligent and persecuted, and they are guilty. And all this, no doubt, so that one day we may live in a society where no man need recollect any disagreeable consequences of his ethnic background.

Meanwhile, little politburos of the insulted and injured spring up; intellectual ascendancies are established on the evidence of the loudest breast-beatings about the messiest scars on the most delicate psyches; taking the right stand on a political issue is confounded with the capacity to define, distinguish, qualify any issue at all, political, philosophical, artistic; what was once an embattled and exacerbated ghetto culture contracts into a coterie (Mrs. Trilling, says her blurb, is "deeply opposed to coterie thinking") with its own obtuse instruments of self-advertisement and self-aggrandizement, its household gods and dogma, its doctrinaire substitutes for thought, its defense-mechanisms against outsiders and traitors, its "proper suit" of Claremont Avenue respectability.

It is possible to live in New York, be of Jewish extraction, and have intellectual abilities—it is even possible to contribute to *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*—without joining the gang. The brilliant maverick is Harold Rosenberg. In "Death in the Wilderness" (one of the essays in his superb collection, *The Tradition of the New*), he makes the point that to be an American is to play a rôle: "Perhaps it is not possible to fit into American Life. American Life is a billboard; individual life in the U. S. includes something nameless that takes place in the weeds behind it." Rosenberg does not himself happen to draw the obvious inference that "the Jew" is the billboard rôle for such American deep-think specialists as Podhoretz and Mrs. Trilling; but he does amusingly trace the recent history of the proper suit they insist on:

> When T. S. Eliot recited his poetry in the radical 'thirties his "clerical cut" was part of his comedy of anachronism: It also went well with his reading of Lear's nonsense verses. In those days Eliot's wit was a knife that cut both ways; he advocated The Family Re-

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> union while exposing the paranoia of its relationships. Eliot's pose, like his poetry, contained a good dose of dada.
>
> Later literary men who copied Eliot's representative-of-culture act missed its two edges and thought the point was to be dull. When I first encountered the gravity of Lionel Trilling I did not get the joke; it took some time to realize that there wasn't any. Pretty soon, people who could not understand Eliot began to look like Trilling.

Or, to take a longer historical perspective, Trilling's suit is a hand-me-down from Arnold and Eliot. But Arnold used that prissy superiority to enrage the Philistines; under cover of it the early Eliot infiltrated the *Times-Lit-Sup* with opinions subversive to those of all the subscribers. Trilling wears it as a skin merely, and is naked to Rosenberg's hoots of derision.

Elsewhere in the same essay, Rosenberg talks about "the cult of seriousness" among American literary intellectuals, whose "fabulous profession [is] to keep hunting the *Zeitgeist* in order to submit to its command. Perhaps, having without resistance yielded to the social sciences all the claims of literature in myth, psychology, history, morality, American writers have nothing to talk about but their own group superstitions." The Deity of this cult of seriousness—Mrs. Trilling's and Podhoretz's, the cult of the periodicals they publish in and control—is of course the "Lionel" of the pharisaic Archangel's Epilogue in Heaven. Podhoretz was (like Ginsberg!) a student of Trilling's at Columbia ("we sat at the feet of Lionel Trilling"), who unlike Ginsberg did the decent thing, stayed out of jail, graduated, started publishing, and was eventually rewarded, by the grace of God, at a very early age with the editorship of *Commentary* (on his grandson's accession, at the age of 23, to the presidency of the Ford Motor Company, Henry Ford the Elder remarked that here was still another proof of the opportunities for enterprising youth in America). Jehovah indeed! As an undergraduate Podhoretz was interested in Yiddish literature: "I remember . . . with what a sense of personal triumph I first heard that Lionel Trilling was writing an essay on Wordsworth and the Rabbis." Mrs. Trilling's second essay on D. H. Lawrence is in the form of a cosy, eyelash-batting family letter to "Dearest Norman" ("When I saw you the other day, you asked me how my Lawrence introduction was going, whether I had finished it yet, and you forced me to the unhappy admission . . ."). For this Claremont daguerrotype, Trilling sits in his proper suit as the Heavenly Father, Mrs. Trilling makes a quick change from Archangel to Madonna, and Podhoretz—still muttering at the prospect of a mocha-colored grandchild—irritably straightens his crown of thorns.

On a single occasion in his book, Podhoretz is moved to a pitch of Voltairean indignation, to style as a quality of individual consciousness, style as the only measure of the civilization he despairs of discovering around him. It is Hannah Arendt's study of Eichmann that

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compels him to turn away from the examination of his Jewish navel and confront the Jewish catastrophe:

> For what is Miss Arendt really saying when she tells us that "if the Jewish people had . . . been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people." Why, she is saying that if the Jews had not been Jews, the Nazis would not have been able to kill so many of them—which is a difficult proposition to dispute. I do not think I am being unfair to Miss Arendt here. Consider: the Jews of Europe, even where they were "highly assimilated," were an organized people, and in most cases a centrally organized people. This was a fact of their condition no less surely than sovereign nationhood was a fact of the French condition. Yet I doubt that Miss Arendt would ever take it into her head to declare that if the French people had not been organized into a nation-state, they could never have been sold out to the Nazis by Pétain and Laval. Throughout this book, Miss Arendt is very nasty about Zionists and Zionism, but the only sense one can glean from her argument is a grain of retroactive Zionist sense. The Jews, she is implying, should have known that anti-Semitism rendered their position in the Diaspora untenable, and they should therefore either have set up a state of their own or renounced their communal existence altogether. She does not explain how such renunciation could have saved them from the Nuremberg Laws. Nor does she tell us why the slaughter of Jews in occupied Russia should have been so complete even though there was no central Jewish leadership or communal organization in the Soviet Union.
>
> But it is unnecessary to pursue the absurdities of Miss Arendt's argument on this issue, just as it is unnecessary to enter once again into the endless moral debate over the behavior of the Jewish leaders—the endless round of apology and recrimination. They did what they did, they were what they were, and each was a different man. None of it mattered in the slightest to the final result. Murderers with the power to murder descended upon a defenseless people and murdered a large part of it. What else is there to say?

This essay takes up the important nineteen of the 371 pages of the volume. Otherwise, whether Podhoretz is writing literary history, literary or pop-cult criticism, political or social comment, all the cant and leaden metaphors of his chosen milieu crowd into his head: "New voices begin to proclaim the birth of a new era and to clamor for . . ."; "the school that . . . rose to dominance . . . on the shoulders of the new wave of enthusiasm for . . ."; "only a thin line divides the human from the bestial"; "his consummate artistry"; "A renewed sense . . . of the loss of values is beginning to impose itself . . ."; "The dilemma

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today is that nothing seems to be left in our world to set an honest man's feelings on fire": so he drifts without a paddle up the creek of generalization, this honest man whose feelings yearn to be set on fire (and, indeed, on one occasion were). Podhoretz disdains to "regard literature as an end in itself"—which is just as well, since he is an all-thumbs literary critic, predictably swindled by that thesaurus of college-humor whimsy and lockstep liberalism, *Catch-22,* overwhelmed by the period cynicism of Nathanael West, thunderstruck by the most contrived style among contemporary American novelists ("Bellow is a stylist of the first order, perhaps the greatest virtuoso of language the novel has seen since Joyce").

It is a fact about Mrs. Trilling, though, that two decades ago she was capable of competent literary criticism. She wrote useful reviews of novels for *The Nation;* she turned out an excellent introduction to the Viking Portable Lawrence (and much later muddied the waters with her ungenerous, febrile recantation in the "Dearest Norman" essay). About fifteen years ago she was persuaded that her forte is social or literary-cum-social criticism; and since then she has specialized in such figures as Margaret Mead, Hiss, Oppenheimer, Profumo's Dr. Ward, Mailer, Edward Albee ("I am going to deal with Mr. Albee's play . . . only as a document of contemporary society"), Marilyn Monroe.

The essay on Dr. Mead (written in 1950) is a shrewd assessment of the condescensions and self-contradictions in the work of that formidably feminist opponent of feminism; though Mrs. Trilling can't help dragging in the Claremont commitment to the civilized and discontented Freud: "sacrifice and frustration lie at the very core of the personal and social organization—it is the great Freudian truth, of course." Discussing Hiss and Oppenheimer, Mrs. Trilling takes the opportunity to dissociate herself from the American climate of hospitality toward the Soviet Union in the 'thirties, and while summarizing the evidence offers some simplistic definitions of "totalitarianism" (once again, the antidote is Harold Rosenberg, in his essay "Couch Liberalism and the Guilty Past"). The piece on Marilyn Monroe—first printed, appropriately, in a huge-circulation women's magazine—pretends to be a magnanimous tribute to Miss Monroe as "the very embodiment of life energy," but is in fact a farrago of intrusive amateur psychoanalyzing and mealy-mouthed snobberies ("I do not know what, if anything, was read at the service, but I'd like to think it was of an elevated and literary kind, such as might be read at the funeral of a person of the first intellectual rank"). Mrs. Trilling contends—oh, that Freud!—that "our mockery" of Miss Monroe's professed "taste for Dostoevsky . . . signifies . . . our disbelief that anyone who has enough sexuality needs to read Dostoevsky." An alternative explanation, which seems not to have occurred to Mrs. Trilling, is that we laughed because (1) Miss Monroe, in her numerous pronouncements,

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had expressed no literary interests before, (2) she had shown no signs of education or intelligence, but some signs of a sense of humor, and (3) we have heard of press agents. It is possible, after all, to believe simultaneously in sexuality *and* Dostoevsky; even if, for at least a few in the audience, poor-butterfly and worse-actress Miss Monroe never gave the impression of being acquainted with either.

It's getting late, and, from Dostoevsky to Marilyn Monroe, the Claremont saints are dead. Still, any subject will do, so long as one can locate a *Zeitgeist* in it, a verification of one's involvement in the holy charade of historical process (Mrs. Trilling, having taken a long look in the mirror, snappishly charges "Dearest Norman" with "compulsive historicism": it seems to be a family trait). The trouble is that the *Zeitgeist* of the present (even of the past!) may be that there is no *Zeitgeist,* not even the *Zeitgeist* of Freudian determinism; and so there is no longer anything to write about except the fact that there is no longer anything to write about. Mrs. Trilling and Podhoretz have names for this narcissistic and infinitely extensible subject: "maturity," "respectability," "responsibility," "tradition," "Claremont Avenue." But that gadfly Rosenberg has the last word: "Naturally you don't develop a style by contemplating your maturity and its implications."

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Fiction Chronicle[1]

I EXPECT I HAVE SAID THIS BEFORE, but I can't help that—I wish I were surer than I am what I mean by a novel: when I use the word, that is, not just loosely and descriptively but with some aspiration, however faint, to critical rigour. What are the qualities I find to have

[1] THE BELLS OF SHOREDITCH, by *James Kennaway*. Atheneum. $3.95. THE MARTYRED, by *Richard E. Kim*. Braziller. $4.50. THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD, by *John Le Carré*. Coward-McCann. $4.50. LOOKING FOR THE GENERAL, by *Warren Miller*. McGraw-Hill. $4.95. APPENDIX A, by *Hayden Carruth*. Macmillan. $4.95. HOW IT IS, by *Samuel Beckett*. Grove Press. $3.95. THE GOLDEN FRUITS, by *Nathalie Sarraute*. Braziller. $4.00. GOING TO TOWN, by *Yuri Kazakov*. Houghton Mifflin. $4.95. BITTER KNOWLEDGE, by *Jack Matthews*. Scribner. $3.50. JUBB, by *Keith Waterhouse*. Putnam. $3.95. THE LOST SHORE, by *Anna Langfus*. Pantheon. $4.95. AUTO-DA-FE, by *Elias Canetti*. Stein & Day. $5.95. THE NIGHT OF THE GENERALS, by *Hans Hellmut Kirst*. Harper & Row. $4.95. EVERY MAN A MURDERER, by *Heimito von Doderer*. Knopf. $5.95. MR. STONE AND THE KNIGHTS COMPANION, by *V. S. Naipaul*. Macmillan. $3.95.

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been the essentials, when I think back on the books about which I have had no doubt at all that *they* were true novels? The central thing seems to be this—that the book should give the delusion of having created its own world, its own people, its own people-world (one wants a new composite word), in which the characters and the environment they are set in seem unique to this particular book and, in a less degree, to this particular writer. All the people of Jane Austen's novels are recognizably Austen people, living in the Austen people-world, which is recognizably the same in all her novels; yet neither people nor people-world are quite interchangeable. Fanny Price would not go into *Pride and Prejudice,* or Anne Elliot into *Emma;* the fact that they wouldn't proves the uniqueness of each creation, which is all the more remarkable because achieved under a cover of such close similarity. Each book, then, must seem like a ticket of entry to something unique; yet at the same time it must give the delusion that this unique people-world was there all the time, it existed before the author began to write about it, it will exist after he has stopped. It is a world self-sufficient, in that it does not need, for the enjoyment and understanding of it, any links of interest or connections of subject-matter with the actual world its readers know about. But of course all novels do have some such links or connections, since all novels were written by people of intelligence and education, interested in the things that such people are interested in. And here comes the snag, and the critic's difficulty. The novel has altogether too many of these connections, and all sorts of them too: political, religious, topographical and historical, biographical and autobiographical. And you cannot say that the true novel will have fewer of them than the books which are not true novels; some specimens of the former will have many more than some of the latter. So what is the rule, how do you decide? The rule is that in the true novel the interest which derives from such things, however great, remains always secondary. The primary interest derives from the people-world unique to that novel, not from the topics which exist outside it. A classic example is *War and Peace:* Tolstoy's ideas about history and Napoleon are far from dull and far from being negligible in the total effect of the book; but the primary interest is in the Tolstoyan creation of Russian society. Or take a novel by James, say *The Portrait of a Lady.* You may be tempted to think that the centre of interest in that book is in the theme of America-in-Europe. But it isn't: the centre is in Isobel and Osmond and Ralph Touchett. America-in-Europe belongs elsewhere as well; they belong *there,* and nowhere else. But critics, it must be admitted, do always tend to talk more about a novel's links or connections with actuality than they do about the unique core of the novel itself. They do so because it is easier. It is easier to say how such and such a novel has relevance to the current headlines, or to Christian belief, or to the War between the States, or to anything, than it is to isolate and evaluate the essence

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of a work of art. And also, of course, with most novels, the former is the best thing to do—the only profitable thing to do. For most novels don't have an essence; in most of them, the links *are* the interest.

By these principles, it seemed to me that of the works of fiction sent me for this assignment, only one was unquestionably a true novel. And that one was James Kennaway's *The Bells of Shoreditch*. I don't think I am the only critic to believe that of the new novelists who have emerged in Britain over the last ten years or so, Kennaway is the most intriguing. The would-be toughies—the Room at the Toppers and the Saturday Night and Sunday Morningers—have clearly fizzled out (*their* interest was certainly more sociological than artistic)—and the two others whom I would have regarded as contenders—Iris Murdoch and William Golding—seem in serious danger, especially the former, of sinking irretrievably into morasses of private whimsy. But Kennaway has the real thing, a unique and powerful imagination which never loses touch with reality. I find his work very hard to review—a good sign in itself, for what one has genuinely admired and been moved by is far harder to write of than the rest; and since *The Bells of Shoreditch* does seem to me a true novel, it imposes the obligation not merely to write around it but to find its centre. And also—again a good sign—if one simply described the story and the people, it would sound flat and trivial. The plot revolves round a crisis of conscience in the lives of a married couple. The husband, who works in a City of London bank, believes he has caught out the boss in an act of fraud which has netted him some half-million pounds: what should he and his wife do about it? She, to complicate things, is having an affair with the boss, and she has an old-fashioned Left-wing conscience which regards all rich bankers as scoundrels a priori, *and* she is a prickly-proud Glasgow Scot who feels at moments that all the English are a lot of decadent so-and-sos anyway. That is the outline: out of it Kennaway has made a very intricate, subtle tragi-comedy. The essence of it is moral: a moral problem acted out through flesh-and-blood human beings, told very largely by dialogue and by indirection (many of the key-scenes are told through the narrative of one character to another), and leaving one with a clear sense of moral decisiveness but *not* with a resentful feeling that any particular judgment is being imposed on one. (On the contrary, the banker, who at the outset may seem to be cast for the role of villain, emerges at the end as perhaps a good deal more admirable than his pharisaical accusers.) These are the qualities of Jane Austen: I am not being silly enough to make comparisons, but the fact that her name can be mentioned without immediately seeming irrelevant proves the point I began from—that *The Bells of Shoreditch* is a true novel.

My next one—Richard E. Kim's *The Martyred*—comes here, rather unfairly perhaps, because it, I felt, is a worthy and honest example of a piece of writing which has many virtues but is not the real

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fictional thing. In it, the interest is entirely in the connections with reality. It is a book about the Korean War, about Christianity and Communism, about torture and martyrdom and betrayal as they appear in the twentieth century; and as we are all interested in those things, we can all be interested in *The Martyred.* But the people are wooden, lifeless; the writing is flat, unvarying in tone and pace. The topics, and the interest derived from them, remain common to all of us; they are never lit up by a special imagination, never incarnated in unique people.

Somewhere between these two—I am still using my criterion of the true novel—comes John Le Carré with *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold.* This is an espionage-thriller in the genre of deadpan, quick-moving narrative. And also in that of moral ambivalence. What happens (it suggests) to a "good" cause when it has to be—or at any rate is—supported by "bad" men? or by "good" men who think themselves constrained to use "bad" means? Is a "good" man working for a "bad" cause a greater offence to God than a "bad" man working for a "good" cause? Is there any "good" or "bad" at all, in causes or in men? These ambivalences are projected through an enormously intricate story of a British spy operating against the Russians and East Germans; he is involved in such a tangle of double- and triple- and quadruple-crossings that if in the end you are unsure which side he is really working for, and why, and whether it makes an iota of difference, that is presumably just the state in which the author intended you to find yourself. The book is rather like Graham Greene with the religion left out; the central character is a very Greenish personage, and when they make the movie they must certainly get Trevor Howard to do him. As entertainment, it is good, quick, intelligent; not childish like Ian Fleming, putting up no spiritual pretensions like Greene. If you choose to take it as more than entertainment, you can only conclude that between Us and Them there is not a ha'porth of moral odds. Which seems an odd conclusion to be led to by an author who is, it appears, "a British civil servant employed in one of the Whitehall ministries."

Next we have a pair of American fantastics: by which, in this context, I mean writers who eschew the austerities of straightforward narrative in favour of intricacies technical or other. The first is Warren Miller's *Looking for the General.* This is a fantasy involving a General in charge of a research establishment working on something-or-other connected with The Bomb. The general goes mad; becomes convinced of the existence of Them from Out There in their flying-saucers; disappears. His assistant, the narrator, goes mad too; sees selected other people around him as emissaries from Outer Space (unknown to themselves). Object of satire: the alleged power- and violence-dreams of the military top brass, those Aunt Sallies of the liberals, the power-crazed button-pushers in the Pentagon. (Heretical question:

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Do the writers who are for ever telling us that such people have such dreams really know they do? Or is it rather a case of such writers having dreams that such people have such dreams?) The fantasy begins well; is very funny in spots; but as a whole doesn't quite come off. Fantasy needs an imagination consistently absorbed in it throughout; here, there is a sense of an initial bright idea which is then sustained by a string of ingenuities—so it goes along chug-chug like an engine never properly firing.

But I found it better reading than the next fantastic, *Appendix A,* by Hayden Carruth. This is, I fear, a sorry tangle of a book. It is enormously, embarrassingly self-conscious. The narrator, who is said to be a poet (though I found this claim quite incredible), is always claiming to be trying to tell the truth about himself in spite of his own lack of skill—so you get self-defensive ironies like: "I haven't the faintest idea how to invent a fiction. . .", the trouble with which being that one finds oneself simply and thoroughly *agreeing.* What may be the cause or a symptom of this self-consciousness is that the book tries to handle an immense range of disparate layers of life and tones of utterance. There is the tough-guy knowingness, bleeding heart under wisecracking exterior. There is satire on the intrigues and inanities of literary parties. There are deep thoughts on the state of American society, through the medium of a Candide-like young Frenchman who imagines that "there are still real people in this country, the same kind of people you had in 1776" and is not surprisingly disillusioned. And so on—I haven't listed the half of them. The author, so I learn from the blurb, is himself a poet, like his narrator; he must, then, have some feeling for form, some power to organize, some knowledge of what belongs *in* and what must go *out.* But he hasn't used them here.

After them a couple of avant-garders from Paris. I don't know, on second thought, if Samuel Beckett is still an avant-garder; but here he is again with *How It Is,* and how it is is just how Sam Beckett is, and has been, and no doubt always will be to the end of his writing career. The talent, genuine though very thin and very derivative (from Joyce and *Sweeney Agonistes*), which achieved *Godot,* now spreads out interminably in mechanical mutterings, of which this seems to be the trick: Think up, first, a situation as drearily nasty and subhuman as possible; hold that situation as nearly static as possible; and let it then issue itself in a sad slack dribble of words. The situation in this one is accurately described in the blurb. "A creature in the mud, a human larva crawling painfully through primeval slime, carrying a coal sack of wet jute . . ." The word-dribble goes along like this: "the dejections no they are me but I love them the old half-emptied tins let limply fall no something else the mud engulfs all me alive it carries my four stone five stone it yields a little under that then no more I don't flee I am banished," etc., etc. What of either profit or

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entertainment is to be won from page after page of this? The oddity of Beckett's writing is that it goes on: for all his works say nothing except that there is nothing to be said. Life is pointless, shapeless; in his later works, and certainly in this one, life is almost lifeless . . . but why go on saying it?

The other Parisian, Nathalie Sarraute's *The Golden Fruits,* is a good deal brisker. It is hardly a novel (by any definition); it is a series of dialogues about a book which is first vastly praised, then falls from favour. The speakers are neither named nor characterized; except for the rise and fall of the book's reception, there is no story. It seems to be a satire on how literary success is made and unmade in the salons of Paris. Praise and blame alike are feverish, exaggerated, made personal. What I am not clear about is whether the author herself sees it as satire—or whether, as the blurb suggests, she is rather presenting an admiring picture of devotion to the cause of literature. What it did remind me of—whether intended or not—was James's judgment on the Parisian littérateurs of nearly 100 years ago: that under all their talky-talk about *l'art du roman* and *le mot juste* and so forth, they were really standardless, egotistical gossipers pretending to be aesthetes.

Two volumes of short stories follow. One is from Russia: *Going to Town,* by Yuri Kazakov. The other is American: Jack Matthews' *Bitter Knowledge.* And I liked them both. Both use the short story as it should be used—as a real story, an anecdote about people. Both achieve successes in solving the real problem of the short story. The anecdote must seem not to have been chosen or shaped at all, but simply to have been picked out by chance from the flow of the people's lives; but it must seem also to have been the one quintessential anecdote, the one moment in those people's lives which concentrated their whole lives. The interesting difference between these two collections is that the American anecdotes are much odder, more grotesque, than the Russian; what impresses about the latter—as about a great deal of Russian writing—is a direct simplicity, totally unafraid of being trite or sentimental, which in the West has long since vanished from any writing with the slightest pretensions to seriousness. (All we have are self-conscious imitations of simplicity: of which Hemingway is the type.) Also impressive is how much more traditional—more old-fashioned, more rooted—are both the writing and the life portrayed in the Russian volume; the country which is "revolutionary" (in one sense) is also deeply "conservative" (in another sense). In the West, at the moment, we seem to be neither one nor the other.

But what we do have—and the other side seems not to have—is the thing which L. H. Myers called "a deep-seated spiritual vulgarity" at the centre of our civilisation: of which perhaps the nastiest, most harmful manifestation is the commercial exploitation of youth and sex. When Khrushchev visited Hollywood he professed himself shocked and disgusted by some sexy movie or other he saw being made

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—some piece of mechanical nonsense so totally degraded that those concerned with it wouldn't even know what you meant if you said it was degraded. The usual response to Khrushchev's disgust was either to laugh at it as naive, or to disbelieve it as hypocrisy. But Khrushchev in this was certainly speaking for his people; for compared with the art and manifestations of popular culture of the West, "puritanical" is the only word for those of the Russians. (Three loud cheers for the Puritans, please, and may they soon return to us!) It is certainly impossible to imagine a novel like Keith Waterhouse's *Jubb* emanating from Russia; for either life there is not "like that," or else the fact that it is is sedulously concealed. *Jubb* is a rather horrifying, meticulously detailed account of a pathetic little man who is utterly incapable of genuine sexual activity of any kind, but who lives in our western society that is endlessly displaying, suggesting, enforcing, selling sex at him and who himself, therefore, is nagged and titillated into a life of substitute-sex—voyeurism, pornography, obscene phone-calls, and the rest of it. I thought it a convincing picture: too convincing, in a way, to make a good novel, for since Jubb tells his own story, the reader is completely enclosed in this world of dingy makebelieve; there is no escape from it, any more than there was for Jubb himself. And the result, for me, is an uneasy feeling that all this doesn't belong in a work of art and entertainment; it should be for the sociologist's report or the psychiatrist's casebook.

This, I suppose, is a problem always present for the novelist who decides to use first-person narrative: if you make your narrator a genuine personality, not just a voice, and especially if you make him peculiar, abnormal, then you must accept this limitation of the closed world in which your reader is put. You would never say of Anna Langfus' novel, *The Lost Shore*, that it smacks more of sociology or psychiatry than of art; but it too has this limitation, in that the central character and narrator, a Polish girl who is a postwar refugee in France, shifts without warning between hallucination and reality; she lives partly among real and living people, partly among the ghosts of her family murdered by the Germans. I found it a haunting and moving novel; and within the limits of the narrator's half-hallucinatory world, a convincing one. For at least Anna Langfus' Maria can make some real contacts with other human beings, which is hardly true of Waterhouse's Jubb.

Next we have a trio of emanations from the Teutonic imagination—and tolerably murky and bloodstained all of them are. First is Elias Canetti's *Auto-da-fé*. This comes with great credentials; it has won the Prix International, though I must say I don't know who awards *that* one, or whether one should pay any more attention to it than one does to the Nobel, and Miss Iris Murdoch considers it "one of the few great novels of the century." Great or not, it is certainly large; profound or not, it is unquestionably dark. It might be called a gro-

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tesque, almost a Gothic, nightmare. Its central personage, Kien, represents the life of learning. He is the "greatest sinologist of his time"; he exists by and for and surrounded by his books; indeed, the fate of his library is in a sense the real story. (At the end he and it, together, go up in flames.) Kien himself is a skeletal horror; all the characters, indeed, are horrors and grotesques. What happens to him, through them, is a kaleidoscopic sequence of acts of violent farce; the book is an exercise in the comic-horrific and the nightmare-fantasy. There is something of Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit;* though Kafka is the more obvious comparison, and I should guess that Canetti owes more than a little to the sinister farceurs of *The Castle.* There is undeniable power in *Auto-da-fé* but for my taste it is altogether too monotonous, too exhausting in its endless scream of wild rage and mirthless laughter. The power, in the end, defeats itself.

Much less pretentious, but to my mind much better reading, is The Night of the Generals, by Hans Hellmut Kirst. Like Kirst's other novels, this is about the German Army in the second world war. Three nicely differentiated generals—an old-style Prussian aristocrat, a middle-class moderate, and a 100% blood-and-guts fanatic; three war and post-war scenes—Warsaw, Paris, Berlin; three revolting sexual murders of prostitutes, all similar, all the work of one of these generals: out of these, plus the reactions of the generals to the July attempt on Hitler, plus the choppings and changings of post-war West German attitudes to militarism, Kirst has made a remarkably absorbing piece of writing —a sardonic comedy which is, incidentally, a far more telling satire on military top brass than anything the English or Americans seem capable of. (We, perhaps, are nations too fundamentally un-military to comprehend true militarism; and you cannot effectively satirise what you do not understand.)

The last of the Germans, Heimito von Doderer's *Every Man a Murderer,* is a work by a novelist who seems to be coming into the English-speaking world only of late, though he has been writing for some forty years. This novel itself was first published in 1938; and in fact it does read with an old-fashioned air, especially noticeable in a tendency to leisured comment and a somewhat ponderous expounding of the story's "moral"—which is clear already in the title. The story concerns a young man whose life of wealth, comfort, success, is poisoned by some incurable, indefinable hollowness at the centre. This is symbolised by his restless search—unnecessary, obsessive, dangerous—to find out the truth about the death by violence of his wife's sister: what he finds, in the end, is that he himself was, in a way, the one responsible. The novel has a quality of quasi-allegory; both in that and in the leisured, meditative manner, one feels the influence of Thomas Mann. I found it an impressive work, in spite of its slowness. Is it coincidence, by the way, that both these German novels, Kirst's and von Doderer's, pivot on the same centre—

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the search for the truth about an act of violence, the killing of an innocent?

And for my last work, I return to home. Or to what I may call home now, I suppose, since I write this in the Caribbean and since the last of these novels is one by the writer whom most of those interested in West Indian fiction will name, if you ask them whom they consider to be the most accomplished, the most intelligent of Caribbean novelists. They often give the name with something of regret in their tone, as if they wished they could give some other, but the truth compels them to give this one—the name of V. S. Naipaul of Trinidad. I agree with this verdict, for my own part, but I think I understand the regret. For the general tendency of the West Indian novel is towards a lush and fevered melodrama, expressed through a prose appropriately clotted; what distinguishes Naipaul is a cool, dry economy, which must stem from a basic detachment from his land and people, possibly a dislike of them. It seems that for the time being at least he has chosen what Joyce chose, the life of exile (I don't know if he too adds "silence and cunning"); and this latest work of his, *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion,* is not only set in London and peopled exclusively by English characters; it is also written in such a way (barring, perhaps, one sly Trinidadian crack at "a Jamaican family of ferocious respectability, who received no negro callers") that no one could possibly guess its author was a West Indian. This is more remarkable than outsiders might think; for "being West Indian" and what that means, the search for an identity as the favourite local cliché calls it, forms understandably a very large part of the stock-in-trade of most West Indian writers. But Naipaul, it may be, is here saying in effect: "I am not going to be 'regional' any more, not going to lean any longer on the ready-made advantages of strange environment, exotic background, fascinating dialect, and all the rest. I am staking my claim to be thought of, not as 'West Indian novelist' but simply as 'novelist.'" That takes courage; and though I cannot pretend to think *Mr. Stone* a success, I can believe that in the future it may be seen to have been an inevitable transition, a necessary exercise. It is a brief tragi-comedy about an elderly man who, after a lifetime of celibacy, marries both suddenly and oddly; it begins extremely well—all through, indeed, it has admirable moments and phrases of penetrating wit—but for my part I found myself losing interest. Too dry, too colourless altogether, I found it in the end; let us hope that in his next work Naipaul will return, if not to the Caribbean, then at any rate to some of its colour-schemes.

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DANIEL AARON

Out of a Dark Wood

SINCE THE PUBLICATION IN 1930 OF HIS UNDERGROUND NOVEL, *Bottom Dogs,* Edward Dahlberg has been negotiating angrily and publicly with a spotted world and with himself. *Because I Was Flesh,* his latest book,[1] is subtitled an "autobiography," but it might better have been called an exercise in self-exorcism. A very self-conscious and studiedly selective account of his boyhood and early life, it is as revealing for what it leaves unrevealed as for what it unshrinkingly and remarkably reports. Not unlike Rousseau in his *Confessions,* like Henry Adams in his *Education,* and perhaps most of all like Sherwood Anderson in his half-fabricated or tinted reminiscences, Dahlberg has daringly exposed a portion of himself without resorting to the cluttering detail or the amplitude of statement that could have blurred the line of his story about a loving-hating son and his mother.

She first appeared in *Bottom Dogs* and in its sequel, *From Flushing to Calvary,* as Lizzie Lewis; and although now Dahlberg presents her as Lizzie Dalberg (he added the "h" to his own name) and in a baroque oracular style so different from the naturalistic pavement prose of his earlier work, he has left her character and her physical appearance unaltered. She emerges after more than thirty years as the same incontinent, vulgar, gullible, ridiculous, suspicious, generous, hopeful, and indomitable creature who drifted through the chapters of his earlier rancid novels. Her marriages and abortive liaisons, her comi-tragic sojourns in Dallas, Memphis, Kansas City and New York are re-told and re-seen. Once again we are in a Dahlbergian *ambiance* of lady barbershops, cuspidors, roaches, varicose veins, and greasy plates. His adolescent years in a Cleveland Jewish orphan asylum are relentlessly exhumed, and the foulness and stench and drabness that suffused the atmosphere of *Bottom Dogs* like the stink of a sewer are if anything more pervasive in the autobiography. Dahlberg, it would seem, is obsessed with the abominations of the flesh and ingeniously various in depicting the sordid. His youth is grubby, louse-infested; his father is "some baleful seminal drop of a depraved rotting forefather"; the whores and demi-reps he observes in his mother's "sanitary" barbershop have sour mouths and prolapsed wombs; he is haunted by sweating undergarments and hair and the sound of flushing toilets; the children retch and vomit over their unspeakable meals; his mother carries "her truss of grief" and the buzzing flies are "lecherous." Even reading is at best "a squalid pleasure" for the ugly graceless narrator;

[1] BECAUSE I WAS FLESH. *The Autobiography of Edward Dahlberg.* New Directions. $5.

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the discovery of Plato brings no rapture but leaves him "still covered with the vermin of ignorance."

And yet *Because I Was Flesh* in its way is a beautiful book in addition to being an extraordinary one; whereas *Bottom Dogs,* although powerful and disturbing, is not. What differentiates one from the other, I think, is not merely that Dahlberg is now looking at this mother and his environment from the inside out, but that he is also trying to understand his Ishmaelitish wanderings, to salvage some meaning from them, and to make tardy oblations to the Hagar toward whom he felt such shame and horror and love. Given the rhapsodic and often postured writing, his "impostumed" prose (to borrow one of the archaic or obsolescent words he seems fond of), one might be tempted to suspect the genuineness of Dahlberg's feelings. Yet to yield to such a temptation would be wrong. What keeps the confessional narration from becoming over-ripe and merely mannered is the distance he manages to place between his boyhood and his present self. His emotions are invariably tempered by reflection; the personal transmuted to the archetypal.

Interpolated throughout his autobiography are meditations, often brilliantly shaped, on the tidal fluctuations of luck, or observations on the fatality of casual experience. Dahlberg, looking back at his unappetizing life, decides that a man rather perfects than corrects his vices, "for we die with all our sins entire, and every wrong, thought or dream or vision in the child matures in the man." He is possessed by the gross desires of adolescence, the yearning for "jocular rumps" and "dimpled thighs," and the poignancy of post-copulative despair. "Each man's past is his Nemesis," he concludes, but he must hug his cockroachy memories even though he swoons with nausea at their recollection. To suppress them would be the ultimate impiety.

The self-revulsion so notable in *Bottom Dogs* has in *Because I Was Flesh* by no means disappeared, but in the autobiography it is distilled into a self-mockery that can turn the grotesque antics of orphan inmates into a sort of comedy. Their exploits and fiascoes are related in a mock-heroic vein as if they were Greek heroes, Socratic dialecticians, or Hebrew prophets. The lofty language he employs, however, is not intended as pure irony. If Melville (and this is a very Melvillean book) can borrow the accents of Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne to dignify his whalers, so can Dahlberg call upon seventeenth century prose writers as well as Homer, Tourneur, Lucian, St. Augustine, Pascal, Rabelais, and the Talmud to mythologize his "jillflirts," "poltfoots," "gullyguts," "hunkers," "wittols," and "noddies." Only in this way, perhaps, could "the bastard issue of a lady barber with dyed grizzled hair" give dimension and meaning to his maggoty life.

The events, spiritual and intellectual, that changed Dahlberg from a regular contributor to the *New Masses,* a writer of what he once called "implication literature," into a celebrator of pagan rites and a com-

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poser of sensual hymns "of flesh and sweat" are precisely those about which he is silent. Only his violent repudiation of socialist and sociological writing in *Can These Bones Live* and his disgusted comments about the "cloacal revulsions" of Caldwell, Farrell, and Dos Passos measure the distance he had traveled between 1930 and 1941.

Because I Was Flesh alludes to some of the literary and philosophical midwives who delivered him from communism's "cankered, miserable skin," but it contains no homage to D. H. Lawrence, his first discerning reader and the man whose condemnations of the fecundless modern wasteland Dahlberg seems to have taken to heart after a brief Marxist interlude.

In his introduction to *Bottom Dogs,* Lawrence had nothing particularly good to say about Dahlberg the writer except that he had succeeded in capturing "the under-dog mind," a "strange, external superficial mind" detached from "the affective and effective self. His will-to-persist is intellectual also. Beyond this, nothing." Lawrence confessed he was glad to have read this "genuine" and "objectionable" novel, so "perfectly sane" and yet so close to "criminal insanity," because it disclosed "the last word in repulsive consciousness, consciousness in a state of repulsion." But he did not want "to read any more books like this."

By far the largest part of Lawrence's essay had to do with Dahlberg's book as an emblem of a sick and savage society. Lawrence believed that the western continent invariably broke the hearts if not the will of its colonizers: "The flow from the heart, the warmth of fellow-feeling which has animated Europe and been the best of her humanity, individual, spontaneous, flowing in thousands of little passionate currents often conflicting, this seems unable to persist in the American soul." *Bottom Dogs* documented the mutual repulsiveness Americans felt for one another, a hostility masked by the cant of social benevolence. The break-down of "blood-sympathy," the sensing of others "by their sweat and their kitchens," accounted for the perfection of American "plumbing," the horror of "halitosis," the "American nausea at coughing, spitting." Tolerant of "tin cans and paper and broken rubbish," American townships went "crazy at the sight of human excrement," a fact which signified for Lawrence the exhaustion of "the transcendental bodiless brotherliness" of the last hundred years, thought but never felt, and the deepening of an inward and physical revulsion of man for man.

The cry of self-revulsion and the accusatory refrain, "They stink! My God, they stink!" that Lawrence heard in *Bottom Dogs* resounds even louder in *From Flushing to Calvary* and in Dahlberg's next book, *Those Who Perish,* a deservedly forgotten hysterical anti-fascist novel published in 1934 in which the New York Jews come off almost as badly as their oppressors. Seven years later, however, in *Can These Bones Live* (interpretations, among others, of Tolstoy, Cervantes, Mel-

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ville, Shakespeare, and Dostoievsky), Dahlberg was not only drawing Lawrencian conclusions about the American mind and literature but also diagnosing the source of its bloodlessness. The "classic hieroglyphical scriptures" of our great writers, he said, were all refusals of the flesh, symptoms of the American's "revulsion against one's own blood flow, the anathema of the covert bowels, the unholy dread of the sub rosa Unclean Man."

Because I Was Flesh might be read as Dahlberg's belated recognition of certain truths (confirmed by his own life and by the sages): that the denial of man, "the defecating, eating and copulating animal," ends in the nightmare of the body, that man casts off his humanity at his own peril, and that the only way back to life is "through the continuous memory of his own egoism and organs." If Lorry Lewis, the autobiographical hero of *Bottom Dogs,* despises himself, thrilling to his own repulsiveness, as Lawrence notes, "in a terrified, perverted way," the "I" of the autobiography has learned to accept his own stench and is saved, as he says of Tolstoy's Ivan Ilytch in *Can These Bones Live,* not by the Holy Writ but by the humanity of the bedpan. "Why do we love our vermin?" he asks at the end of his autobiography. "Do our souls need dirt, lice, rats, and puddles and woe?" And he replies:

> We caress and stroke our rotten, starved years because the dream requires it. You who have pondered Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream consider this: the seven lean kine that stand in the hot river Nile will always devour the seven fat ones—aye, seven again; it is the sign of pestilence and famine—but there is more food here for the despairing, the niggard heart than in the tenderest grass and herbs.

Lizzie Dalberg, the squalid quack and chin-scraper, is the redemptive figure in the autobiography, not so much as a symbol of the self-sacrificing mother so dear to our national folklore but as an equivalent of Ivan Ilytch's sanctifying servant who "cannot make those subtle distinctions between a man in his social and decorous clothes and in his honestly defecating necessities." Dahlberg's restrospective acceptance of his mother is thus tantamount to an acceptance of his loathed self—his Jewishness, his fatherlessness, his wormy childhood—and, finally, of his hypocritical flesh.

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SIGURD BURCKHARDT

The Limits of Representation

THE HIGHEST PRAISE I CAN PAY HOCHHUTH'S *The Deputy*[1] is that I found it as painful to read as if it had appeared in 1946, among the first of the dozens of unimaginable books on the *Endlösung*. I am glad I don't have to see it staged. Reading is a private act, not a social one; the prospect of having to go through the motions of an evening at the theatre—the unavoidable rites of getting dressed, being ushered to my upholstered seat, seeing and being seen as one of a "public"—seems, for this play, intolerable. It may be that just for this reason I should go—that this is the very un-Aristotelian catharsis Hochhuth intended. If he meant that I, having arrived with the assurance of someone doing the accepted, should come to feel ashamed of my dress, my seat, my words, my role, and in the end steal away trying not to look like a member of the audience, like myself—if he meant that, he would succeed.

Not by strategies of involvement, or for that matter of *Verfremdung*. In fact, not by any strategies whatever. By metatheatrical standards *The Deputy* is almost completely artless. Hochhuth has had the tact—the moral instinct, rather—to forbid himself indirection; he attacks frontally a subject so enormous that a dramatist can hardly think of it without at the same time thinking of ways to outflank it. In *The Deputy* the murder of millions is not focussed on a small group of victims, nor is it parabolized into an archetypal event. The play makes a few unsuccessful moves in both these directions, but they remain peripheral. The enormity is left as it is—a discrete occurrence, real, documented, located unmetaphorically and unambiguously in historical space and time. The space is Berlin-Rome-Auschwitz; time is measured by the schedule of the Final Solution. From the first act to the fifth, nothing changes except the rate of processing, which rises with each passing month.

There is no "problem." If Auschwitz is (as I believe it is) closer to the moral center of our consciousness than Hiroshima, the reason is not that it poses the more profound moral problem, but on the contrary that it poses *no* such problem. To think of it as one is already an evasion; it is the point where argument ceases. Which is not to say, of course, that it doesn't demand thinking about. The attacks—in large measure misdirected—on Hannah Arendt's Eichmann book were full of anger at seeing an absolute subjected to analysis, drawn into the morass of ambiguity from which it was to save us. Norman Podhoretz's indignation differs in degree, not in kind, from Judge Musmanno's jury-bench rhetoric; the moral cadence, though much more subtly managed, is the same. And beneath it there is an undertone almost

[1] THE DEPUTY, by *Rolf Hochhuth*. Translated by *Richard* and *Clara Winston*. Preface by *Dr. Albert Schweitzer*. Grove Press. $5.95.

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of relief: with Eichmann we are, finally, up against IT—IT being the categorical imperative of our relativized time; with Auschwitz we have come to the heart of darkness, the skull-fenced inner sanctum, and we do not intend to have its sanctity—that is, its moral fixity—called into question by self-indulgently clever intellectuals. But Auschwitz is *not* an absolute, the anchor point of a moral diabology; it was an event, it happened. Hochhuth has the simplicity to let it happen.

Nor did it "befall," a single monstrous crime; it was carried out over a space of three years and thousands of miles. It left room, if not for prevention, at least for reduction in scope. Eichmann in his glass cage, immobile amidst passionately accusing motion, furnishes a powerful but also a distorting metaphor, because he seems to be a fixed point, an all-or-nothing center, where in truth there were degrees: assembly and transport timetables, production quotas, efficiency studies. Time was of the essence, as were numbers. True, it does not matter in principle—as Bundestag President Gerstenmayer reminded certain Germans who complained of "exaggerations"—whether six million Jews were gassed or only a dozen. The reminder was appropriate to so vile a complaint, but except as a reminder it obviously won't do. The fact reduces principle almost to insignificance; six million is, precisely, five hundred thousand times worse than twelve. Legal and moral philosophy seems to break down; the event, not only in magnitude but in essence, is falsified by the representative case. Its essence, as Hochhuth has the simplicity to see, is that it permits of no such cases.

The difficulty is that art cannot do without them, and Hochhuth, by the nature of his enterprise, cannot do without art. Perhaps Alfred Kazin is right: even as a subject, totalitarianism cannot yield art. At least it does seem true that the attempt to bring Auschwitz within the limits of art unavoidably lessens its horror. As Hochhuth points out in a note, the gas chambers deny metaphor or else are denied by it.

That, I think, is why he chose to cast his play in an apparently classical, Schillerian mold. Beginning with Erwin Piscator, many reviewers have marked Hochhuth's affinity with Schiller—and misunderstood it. His language, condemned by his critics and deplored even by many of his defenders, spells out his intention. It foregoes the advantages of both prose and verse; it has neither the simple referential transparency of prose nor the ability of verse to create its own internal order. It is studiedly un-Schillerian, just close enough to the measures of classical German drama to make us aware of the dismal difference.

The same is true of the play as a whole. Schiller would have given the Pope sufficient human and moral stature—and the political circumstances sufficient complexity—to make the issue one of tragic conflict and the decision a tragic failure. In short, he would have given the Pope just the role which Pius' defenders claim for him as the historically true and just one; and if necessary, he would have violated historical truth for the higher truth of tragic art. The point of Hochhuth's Pope is that he is, again, studiedly un-Schillerian; Hochhuth

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sacrifices art to the truth of the incommensurable historical event. (At least as he sees it; and I am persuaded that in substance he sees it justly.) Though there is a show of inner conflict, of concern for the Jews and countervailing reasons of state, it is no more than a show; the reasons are the merest rationalizations, and the concern is mere pontificating in the first person plural. Almost perversely, Hochhuth drains the climactic scene—Pius' *gran rifiuto*—of dramatic force by denying the Pope both arguments and agony.

All this would seem to point to parody; but this Brechtian device Hochhuth also denies himself. He accepts the unrefracting seriousness of the classical form, but withholds the comfort of its dignity and order. His tactic is not to make us feel revulsion at ordered and humane existence; the pleasures of civilized life are not made, as in *Mondo Cane,* to appear inherently nasty. His tactic is one of persistent intrusion; the unspeakable cannot be kept out. Into the opening scene—the Papal Nuncio in Berlin is instructing the hero, Father Riccardo, in the difficulties and complexities of his diplomatic role—there breaks the SS officer Kurt Gerstein, hysterical with his knowledge of the death camps and demanding that something be done, that something be *said.* But the Nuncio retreats into the fastness of protocol: he cannot take cognizance of the unspeakable, the unadmitted and inadmissible. This is the pattern: *non possumus.* We may be individually kind and humane, we may even take risks to save this Jew or that; but as members of ordered society, responsible for its continuance "we" (the plural of majesty) cannot afford to speak, cannot even afford to know.

And what about God's spokesman, the Deputy of Christ? The authority of his voice likewise depends on the authority with which he wears his spotless uniform. The play is a desperate assault on God, a shouting demand that He speak with authority—only to be answered with that same *non possumus.* If He speaks at all, it is without authority, in the ineffectual voice of violated, lower-case, first-person man. But Hochhuth denies himself and us the easy humanistic consolation that this voice is enough; far from putting a stop to totalitarian murder, it does not even suffice to sustain the worth of the individual. Martyrdom is no longer possible, as the Doctor, learned in the ways and meaning of mass extermination, explains to Father Riccardo:

> Not long ago the brutal idiots here
> had their fun with a certain Polish priest
> who said he wanted to die in place
> of another prisoner—a man with a family.
> A voluntary offering, in short . . .
> They kept him in the starvation cell ten days,
> then even put a barbed crown on him.
> Oh well, he had what he wanted . . .
> suffering in Christ—and Rome
> will surely canonize him some day.
> He died as an individual,

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a fine, old-fashioned, personal death.
You, my dear friend, would be merely gassed.
Quite simply gassed, and *no one,*
no man, Pope or God, will ever find out.

The point is that without the "brutal idiocy" of the camp guards—without their atavistic willingness to play roles in a pointless symbolic game—not even the elements of tragedy are present. Where everything is incinerated, there is no "dying in place of," no martyrdom and Calvary; the very notion of sacrifice, of taking someone's place (the play's German title, *Der Stellvertreter,* means literally "he who takes another's place") has lost its meaning.

This is how *The Deputy* should be understood—and, if staged at all, staged: as a series of measures to block our evasions of the truth it "represents," to block in a way itself as the last and most plausible evasion. Of the three possible translations of the title—Vicar, Deputy, or Representative—it is the last that is most adequate. For in the end the question is one of representation in every sense of the word. Since it is the essence of representation to institutionalize, to force reality into a frame that puts us at a remove from it and makes it intelligible, Auschwitz cannot be represented. The truth we need most to know and remember is lost almost in the act of knowing and remembering, the act of representation. Where the function of art is to help us "come to terms" with reality, Auschwitz is what we must never come to terms with.

In their varying degrees, from ineffectual pity and timid decorum to callous brutality, all the "representatives" in the play manage to come to terms with it; that is the principle of their sameness (which Hochhuth, in the one device he permits himself, signifies by having the same actor play various roles). But that is not all: the hero himself twice changes clothes with a Jew, twice tries to wrest meaning from the horror by an act of representation, of taking another's place. He fails both times; in the end the only place he is granted is ***his*** place, with no assurance that his death will prove meaningful, let alone sacrificial.

It is true that in a few instances Hochhuth invites an archetypal interpretation—most notably when he has the Pope, Pilate-like, wash his hands. The Doctor sounds at times like the devil incarnate rather than like a man vain of having rid himself of all the "prejudices" of value and meaning. There are some lapses into pathos, some digressions into an inappropriate kind of realism. But these do not substantially divert the play's force and point. I don't know that *The Deputy* will become part of the dramatic canon; it cannot be divorced from the unique event. Perhaps it is not art; but it is more than dramatized documentation. Ultimately it compels us, the audience, to identify ourselves—with ourselves: spectators, well-dressed, softly seated, of what ought not to be seen, cannot be represented, yet must not be hidden.

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